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CATECHISM MADE EASY,

BEING

A FAMILIAR EXPLANATION

OF THE

Catechism of Christian Doctrine,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE

REV. HENRY GIBSON,

Late Catholic Chaplain to the Kirkdale Gaol and Kirkdale Industrial Schools.

VOL. III.

"EXCEPT YOU UTTER BY THE TONGUE PLAIN SPEECH, HOW SHALL IT BE KNOWN WHAT IS SAID? FOR YOU SHALL BE SPEAKING INTO THE AIR."—I. COR. XIV. 9.

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TO THE READER.

In presenting to the Public the third and last volume of "Catechism Made Easy," the Author returns his sincere thanks to the Clergy generally for the kind reception which they have accorded to his humble efforts. The Doctrine of the Sacraments, treated of in the present volume, is at the same time so sublime and of such extreme importance, that he has felt more than ordinary diffidence in the prosecution of his work, being sensible not only of the difficulty of combining Theological accuracy with the simplicity of expression necessary for the purpose of familiar instruction, but also of the responsibility of rendering that instruction thoroughly solid and complete. How far he has succeeded in his endeavours his readers must judge. At the same time he has the consolation of reflecting that a Work of this nature, however imperfect, can hardly fail to

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be of some use in supplementing others of the same character, our resources in the way of catechetical instruction being at present so limited.

As the first and second volumes of the Catechism are almost out of print, and a republication of the whole may shortly be called for, the Author will feel greatly obliged to his brethren, the Clergy, for any suggestions which may tend to make the Work of more general and permanent use.

In the present volume, and probably in the preceding ones, allusion has been sometimes made to the heroic deeds and saintly lives of certain holy souls, not yet canonised by the Church. Mindful of the decree of Pope Urban VIII., the Author protests once for all that whatever expressions he may have used in regard to such subjects throughout the Work, are to be understood as relating to facts resting on mere human evidence, and without any intention of anticipating the future judgment of the Church.

HENRY GIBSON.

BELMOUNT, OUTGATE, AMBLESIDE,

Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1876.

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CATECHISM MADE EASY.

FIRST INSTRUCTION.

CHAPTER VI.—*The Sacraments. Their Nature. Their Efficacy, and whence it is derived. Happiness of receiving them worthily. How many and what they are.*

We come now to speak of the seven Sacraments, which our Blessed Lord has left us in his Church to help us on our road to heaven. Without the grace or assistance of God, we can neither believe what he has taught us, nor practice what he has commanded us; so that of ourselves we cannot make a single step on our way to eternal life. But Almighty God, who loves us tenderly, and earnestly desires our salvation, is always ready to give us his grace, if we on our parts are willing to receive it, and if we take the proper means to obtain it. What, then, are those means? Prayer and the holy Sacraments. Prayer was always in the power of man as a means of grace from the very beginning of the world; but the Sacraments have only existed since the time of our Blessed Lord. *He* it was who instituted them while he was upon earth, in order to supply the different wants of our souls by communicating to us the fruits of his sacred Passion. Let us, my dear children, show our gratitude to him for his Infinite Goodness by doing our best to learn and understand all that we

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can respecting these precious means of grace, on the devout use of which our salvation will principally depend.

Before we come to speak of the different Sacraments, the Catechism first teaches us the nature of them in general.

Q. What is a Sacrament?

A. A Sacrament is an outward sign of inward grace, ordained by Christ, by which grace is given to our souls.

From this answer we see that there are three things required to make a Sacrament, namely, an *outward sign*, an *interior grace*, signified by and produced in the soul by means of that sign, and thirdly, *our Blessed Lord's institution*. If any one of these three things be wanting, there may be a sacred rite or ceremony, but there can be no Sacrament.

1. In the first place, a Sacrament is *an outward sign of inward grace*. By a *sign* we mean something that signifies, or shows forth, something else different from the sign itself. Some things are naturally signs of others; for example, smoke is of its own nature the sign of a fire, and a footprint on the sand is of itself a sign that some one has passed that way. Other things only become signs by common agreement; thus the signboard of an inn is understood to be a mark that it is a house of entertainment, and a bugle sounding in battle signifies that it is time for the troops to advance. All such signs may be called *outward signs*, because they are something outside of us, and may be perceived by the external senses. In other words, you can either see them, or hear them, or touch them. Now the Sacraments all contain some such sign, but what it shows forth or signifies, is something *within us*, namely the grace of God working inwardly in the soul. Hence

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the Catechism says that a Sacrament is *an outward sign of inward grace.* Thus in Baptism the washing of the child with water and the saying of the words, "I baptise thee, &c.," are an outward sign of the inward cleansing of the soul from sin ; in Confirmation the anointing with oil by the Bishop and the saying of the usual form of words, are an outward sign of the interior grace of the Holy Ghost enlightening and strengthening the soul. The same thing will be seen in all the other Sacraments.

2. In the second place, this outward sign must not only *show forth* a certain inward grace, but it must be the *cause* of it, in other words it must actually be the *means of conveying grace to the soul.* For this reason the Catechism says, that a Sacrament is an outward sign of inward grace, *by which grace is given to our souls.* In this the Sacraments differ from all other signs. A signboard at an inn shows you that you may get refreshment there, but it does not feed you or give you to drink. A church bell is a sign that it is time for you to come to Mass, but it does not take you up and carry you there. It is different with the Sacraments ; *they* actually contain and apply to our souls the grace which they signify. Baptism really washes us from sin, Confirmation really strengthens and enlightens us, the Holy Eucharist really feeds and nourishes us. It is in this that the difference consists between the Sacraments of the New Law and the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Law of Moses. The latter were mere signs and figures of the grace of God ; they did not really contain or bestow it. Thus Circumcision was a sign of reconciliation with God, but it did not actually remit original sin, which was forgiven, not by any legal ceremony, but by faith in a Redeemer to come. In the same way the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb was a token of deliverance from the bondage

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of Egypt and the slavery of the devil, but it did not actually bring about either one or the other.*

* It may be thought advisable, in the case of an advanced class of children, to say a few words on what are called by theologians the *Sacramentals*, showing in what respects they resemble, and in what they differ from the Sacraments. Among the Sacramentals we include *prayers prescribed or solemnly recited in Church, holy water, the sign of the cross, Agnus Dei's, the bishop's blessing or that of the priest at the end of Mass, the various exorcisms, blessings and consecrations used in the Church*, and *many other sacred rites and ceremonies*. All these resemble the Sacraments, inasmuch as they are *outward signs* showing forth some grace or some blessing which accompanies them, but they differ essentially from them in this, that they do not actually contain or convey the grace which they signify, but only prepare the soul to receive it by exciting in her dispositions of faith, humility, contrition, &c., and are the means of moving God to grant his grace in answer to the prayers of the Church. In other words, as theologians say, the Sacraments *convey* grace *ex opere operato*, that is, by the very performance of the act instituted by our Lord for the purpose, and the Sacramentals *obtain* it *ex opere operantis*, namely in virtue of the good dispositions of him who performs, or of him to whom the sacred ceremony is applied.

We may add that the Sacramentals, in most cases at least, owe their institution not to Jesus Christ in person, but to the Church, and are therefore mostly wanting in the third as well as the second condition necessary to constitute a Sacrament. Some of the Sacramentals, however, such as the sign of the cross, holy water, &c., undoubtedly come down from the time of the Apostles, and may even have been instituted by our Blessed Lord, not indeed as a means of conveying grace like the Sacraments, but for the purpose of disposing the soul to receive and profit by it.

Hence we may conclude that the Sacramentals are deserving of great esteem and reverence, and that the devout use of them is the fruitful source of innumerable blessings, but at the same time that they are quite different in their nature from the Sacraments, which contain the very treasure of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, and produce infallibly in the soul, that is worthily disposed, the most wonderful effects, both in purifying her from sin and enriching her with every grace.

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Let us now see what is the nature of the inward grace which the Sacraments convey to the soul. It is of two kinds, *sanctifying grace* and *sacramental grace*. You have already learnt that grace is God's help, given by him out of his own pure Goodness, to make us holy, and so to save us. Now this help is of two kinds. First of all we need God's help to cleanse us from sin and make us his friends, and when we are his friends, we still need his help to make us yet dearer and more pleasing to him. This is what is called *justifying* or *sanctifying grace*, because it makes us, so to speak, just and holy in the sight of God. All the Sacraments give us this kind of grace; they either make us friends of God or increase his friendship in our souls. But besides giving us sanctifying grace, each of the Sacraments bestows upon us a right to certain special helps to supply some particular want of the soul. This grace is different in the different Sacraments, and hence it is called *Sacramental grace*. Thus Baptism entitles us to the graces we require to fulfil the solemn promises we there make to God; Confirmation gives us a claim to the light and strengthening grace of the Holy Ghost in circumstances of need; the Holy Eucharist nourishes and supports our souls in continual health and vigour, and so of the rest. For our Blessed Lord instituted each Sacrament for some special end, and the Sacramental grace of the Sacrament is the particular grace given by it which enables it to fulfil that end.

3. But how is it, you will ask, that such great and wonderful effects are produced in the soul by the performance of what appears to be a mere outward act? It is because God has so willed it—God, who can do all things, and can choose any means he pleases to execute his Will. In other words, it is in virtue of our Lord's institution; hence the Cate-

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chism says that every Sacrament must be *ordained by Christ.*

In the third place, then, it is necessary that the outward sign of the Sacrament, by means of which grace is conveyed to the soul, should have been instituted for the purpose by our Blessed Lord. For God alone has power to attach an inward grace to an outward sign, in other words to make an ordinary act of common life, such as the washing with water, the anointing with oil, or the saying of certain words, capable of penetrating into the soul, and producing there a spiritual effect. This is what our Blessed Lord in his Infinite Wisdom and Goodness has thought fit to do, when he instituted the seven Sacraments; for he there bestows upon our souls many precious graces by means of visible and outward forms. You will wonder, perhaps, why it is that he has made use of such weak and feeble instruments to produce such wonderful effects in the souls of men. My dear children, it is no doubt to exercise our faith, and to make trial of our obedience to his Divine word. "The foolish things of this world hath God chosen," says the apostle, "that he may confound the wise, and the weak things of this world hath God chosen that he may confound the strong."* Moreover, the outward and visible part of the Sacrament serves to make us better understand its interior and visible effects; for man, being made up of body as well as soul, and being naturally ignorant and earthly minded, is better able to comprehend what is shown forth to his senses by certain outward signs, than what is altogether spiritual and interior. For this reason, also, the Church has appointed certain sacred rites and ceremonies to accompany the administration of the Sacraments, in order that their interior and invisible

* I. Cor. i. 27.

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effects may be better understood, while at the same time we may be filled with greater reverence towards these sublime mysteries.

Q. Do the Sacraments always give grace?

A. Yes; to those who receive them worthily.

The Sacraments, my dear children, always *contain* grace, for it belongs to the very nature of a Sacrament to be a means of conveying grace to the soul; nevertheless they only *give* it *to those who receive them worthily*. To all indeed the precious gift is offered, but by many it is refused; for those who receive the Sacraments in bad dispositions thereby place an obstacle to the entrance of Divine grace into their hearts. It is as if one of you were to go to his mother, cup in hand, to ask her for a drink, and when she began to pour, were to draw the cup away or cover it up. It would be through no fault of hers that your thirst was not quenched, but through your own folly in refusing to receive the refreshment which was offered. Again, supposing we were to block up all the windows of this room with shutters and curtains so that the light could not enter, we should be left in darkness, not because God refuses us light, for it would be there outside waiting to come in, but because we of our own accord have placed an obstacle to its entrance. So it is with those who receive the Sacraments unworthily. God's grace is ever there, ready to enter into their souls and cleanse, and strengthen and enlighten them; but they themselves wilfully reject, and trample it under foot. Can you imagine a greater impiety, a more horrible sacrilege?

Q. Whence have the Sacraments the power of giving grace?

A. From the merits of Christ's precious blood, which they apply to our souls.

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It is *from the merits of Christ's Precious Blood, which they apply to our souls,* that the Sacraments derive their power of giving grace. For the Precious Blood of our Lord is the source of all grace, nor do we ever receive any gift or favour from the Heavenly Father except what is granted us for the love of his Divine Son. Now it is principally by means of the Sacraments that our Blessed Lord communicates to us the merits of his Passion and Death. They are, so to speak, seven channels, by which the fruit of his Precious Blood is applied to the souls of men. Hence the Sacraments are all-powerful, because the Blood of Jesus is all-powerful. No matter, for example, how great may be the stains of sin upon the soul, the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance are sufficient to efface them ; no matter how dull of understanding or cold of heart a man may be, the Sacrament of Confirmation is able to enlighten and inflame him. Moreover, it is of no importance, as far as regards the grace of the Sacrament, whether we receive it from a sinner or a saint, since the minister of the Sacrament is only the instrument of God to convey his grace, and the grace itself is derived from the Precious Blood of our Lord, which can never fail. So it is that good wine is equally rich and pure, whether it be drunk out of a cup of gold or out of an earthen vessel.

Q. Is it a great happiness to receive the Sacraments worthily ?

A. Yes ; it is the greatest happiness in the world.

To receive the Sacraments worthily, is, as the Catechism says, *the greatest happiness in the world.* For the Sacraments unite us to God, who is the centre of our being and the source of all happiness. He has made us for himself, and He alone can satisfy our hearts. Hence when we place our happiness in

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worldly pleasures or the gratification of our own appetites and passions, we miserably deceive ourselves ; for fleeting and perishable enjoyment cannot satisfy or fill the heart of man, which was created for God alone. On the other hand, what can equal the peace and joy of soul which accompanies a good confession, or who can describe the happiness of a devout Communion ? For even in this life God knows how to reward his faithful servants, and to fill the hearts of those who love him with the sweetness of his heavenly consolation.

Q. How many Sacraments are there ?

A. These seven : Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Order, and Matrimony.

The Sacraments, my dear children, are *seven* in number, and they are given us by God to provide for the seven great spiritual wants of man in his pilgrimage upon earth. These wants of our soul correspond to certain necessities which we experience in our bodily life. First of all, we came into this world by a natural birth—so also must we be spiritually born, and made children of God by *Baptism*. But the newly-born infant is weak and helpless, and has to grow and acquire strength before he can use his limbs, and run about, and provide for his own wants. Our souls also are weak and feeble, till they are strengthened by the Holy Ghost in *Confirmation*. Thirdly, as the child grows up, he requires abundant and nourishing food for his support. This our Lord has provided for our souls in the *Holy Eucharist*, which is his own Sacred Body and Precious Blood, given to us for our spiritual nourishment. But it may happen that the child or grown-up man may be attacked by some sickness or disease, in which case he must have recourse to the doctor, and take proper remedies to effect his cure. The soul also often

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labours under spiritual infirmities, far worse than any corporal ailment, namely, the diseases caused by actual sin. For these our Lord has provided remedies in the Sacrament of *Penance*, and a physician, namely, the priest, to administer them. It often happens, however, with regard to our bodies, that after the disease is cured, there remains some weakness or infirmity resulting from it, which it is necessary to make use of further means to remove, so that the body may be restored to its former strength and vigour. This want exists also in the soul after the disease of sin has been cured in the Sacrament of Penance, and our Lord has provided a remedy for it in the strengthening and healing grace of *Extreme Unction*, which removes all remnants of the wounds inflicted on our souls by the abuse of our various senses, and renews our spiritual and very frequently our corporal strength. Finally, in the life of man on earth it is necessary that there should be rulers and magistrates to govern and direct mankind, as well as a constant increase of the human race to supply the place of those who are daily removed by death. So also in the Church of Christ, which is the City of God upon earth, must there be Bishops and Priests to rule, and subjects to obey ; for which want our Blessed Lord has provided by the Sacrament of *Holy Orders*, in which pastors are ordained to guide and govern the faithful, and that of *Matrimony*, by which the propagation of the human race is blessed and sanctified, and parents receive grace to bring up their children in the fear and love of God. From this, my dear children, you see why the Sacraments are seven in number, and how admirably our Blessed Lord has provided in them for the various spiritual wants of man.

You will notice that among these seven Sacraments there are two which are instituted by our

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Lord to wash away the stains of sin, and to restore the soul to the friendship of God. These are Baptism and Penance, the one of which forgives *original* sin, and actual sin too if there be any on the soul, and the other remits only that *actual* sin which is committed after Baptism. When a soul is in mortal sin, it is, as you know, dead in the sight of God, for his grace is the life of the soul, just as the soul itself is the life of the body. For this reason these two Sacraments, Baptism and Penance, are sometimes called the *Sacraments of the dead*, because they may be received by those whose souls are spiritually dead by being in mortal sin. On the other hand, the rest of the Sacraments are called *Sacraments of the living*, because to receive them worthily our souls must be living in the sight of God by being in his grace and free from mortal sin.

Can you tell me now, how often during our lives we may receive the holy Sacraments? My dear children, there are three of them which can only be received once, namely, Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. The reason is, because these three Sacraments imprint on the soul a certain mark or *character*, which we can never lose; thus, Baptism makes us the children, Confirmation the soldiers, and Holy Orders the priests of God. Being once God's children, we are his children always, so there is no need to be baptised a second time. In the same way, if we are once the soldiers of God or his priests, we are so for ever; hence there is no need, nor is it possible to receive these Sacraments more than once. It may happen, indeed, that a child may rebel against or disown his father, but he cannot help being still his son, and according to his conduct is worthy of punishment or reward as such. A soldier, too, may be a traitor and abandon his colours, but he is still a soldier, and if pursued and caught, will be

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tried and punished as a deserter. So will it be with us at the tribunal of God. Whatever character we have borne here, namely, as children, soldiers, or priests of God, in the same shall we appear on the day of judgment, and we shall be punished or rewarded according as we have neglected or faithfully fulfilled the duties and obligations of that particular state.

With regard to the other four Sacraments, we can receive them as often as there is fitting occasion; but the two which we can approach to most frequently, and which are the principal source of grace and strength for a Christian in his earthly pilgrimage, are Penance and the Holy Eucharist; in other words, Confession and Communion.

I will now relate to you a story or parable, which I want you to explain to me. It is called

THE CITY OF THE TWO FOUNTAINS.

Once upon a time there existed in the East a certain city, which was inhabited by a busy crowd of men of all races and nations. This city was adorned with many magnificent and costly palaces. There were to be found also within its walls beautiful parks and public gardens, but the greatest ornament which it possessed were two magnificent fountains, the waters of which were amply sufficient to supply the wants of all the inhabitants.

One of these fountains was built of beautiful white marble. It stood in the middle of the city, and poured forth day and night an abundant stream of water of the purest and most refreshing quality. This water was conveyed by means of seven pipes, formed of the purest gold, into the different quarters of the city, so that the inhabitants might find it at hand to supply their wants at any moment. But what was most remarkable was, that the water which flowed from this fountain possessed many precious and admirable qualities. Not only did it serve to refresh and quench the thirst of those that drank of it, but such was its efficacy that it acted as a sovereign medicine to cure diseases, and to restore health and strength to the sickly and infirm. Nay more, by drinking of these waters or bathing therein, the

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poor became rich, the old were made young again, the hungry were satisfied, the wretched and unhappy were filled with joy and consolation. Moreover, these most precious waters were at all times open to those who came to draw therefrom, without any charge or hindrance whatever.

Side by side with this beautiful marble fountain was another, built of common brick, which, however, was painted over with gold and the most gorgeous colors, and adorned with numberless costly but brittle ornaments. Such was the art with which this fountain was decorated, that no one could recognise the materials of which it was composed. Moreover, those who tasted of the waters, were equally liable to be deceived as to their real quality and effects. They were, indeed, sweet to the taste, and they had the wonderful property of charming the various senses ; for example, those who drank therefrom had their ears ravished with the sound of enchanting music, their tastes gratified with the flavour of delicious meats, their touch soothed and indulged with luxurious and sensual delights. But these effects were very temporary ; they soon passed away, and were succeeded by nauseousness and disgust. The sweetness of the taste turned into bitterness, and the charms of the other senses to weariness, sickness of heart, and other racking pains of body, which usually terminated in disease and death. Yet, would you believe it? the waters of this painted and deceitful source, were far more frequented by the foolish inhabitants of the city, than those of the beautiful marble fountain, which spread around, among those who partook of them, health, happiness, and plenty. Hence it happened that there reigned in this city, which possessed so wonderful a remedy for all the ills of life, the most absolute misery, wretchedness, and poverty.

My dear children, can you read me this riddle ; in other words, can you explain to me the meaning of this parable ? This Eastern city is the world, inhabited by the countless multitude of the human race. The beautiful fountain of pure white marble is the Body of Jesus on the cross, from whose sacred wounds issues forth his Precious Blood, to cleanse and sanctify mankind. The seven channels which conduct the waters from the fountain are the seven Sacraments by means of which the Sacred Blood of our

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Lord is applied to the souls of men. There we drink of the living waters of Divine grace, of which our Blessed Lord says, "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever."* And this precious water of the grace of God has the wonderful property of healing all the diseases and infirmities inflicted on our soul by sin. Moreover, it renews our youth by imparting to us fresh strength and fervour in the service of God, it enriches us with the choicest heavenly favours, it satisfies our spiritual hunger with good things by filling us with heavenly peace and consolation. On the other hand, the painted fountain of brick, from which there issue forth sweet but poisonous waters, is the world with its false joys and delusive pleasures. Unhappy man, blinded to his real good, too often abandons the living waters of the Holy Sacraments, and seeks to slake his thirst with the poisonous draughts of worldly pleasures. But what is the consequence? His soul becomes oppressed with a fatal languor, he becomes insensible to the voice of conscience, to the warnings of Almighty God, and is at length attacked with the fatal disease of mortal sin which causes him to perish miserably and eternally in the very neighbourhood of that fountain of grace, which, if he had had recourse to it, would have preserved, or would even have restored the life of his soul. Let *us*, my dear children, be wiser in our generation! Let us bless and thank our dear Lord for having opened to us from his sacred wounds these seven abundant sources of eternal life! Above all, let us learn to value them as they deserve, and to approach to them, whenever occasion offers, with becoming fervour and reverence.

* John iv. 13.

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SECOND INSTRUCTION.

Baptism. Its Nature, Effects and Institution. The Minister of Baptism.

We come now, my dear children, to speak of Baptism, which is the first of the seven Sacraments. It is put first because it is the first which we receive, and also because it is the most necessary of all, since our Blessed Lord expressly tells us that nobody can enter into heaven who has not been born again, and become a child of God by Baptism. People may be saved in many cases without being Confirmed, or going to Confession or Communion, but they can never be saved without receiving Baptism, either in fact, or at least in desire.

Q. What is Baptism?

A. Baptism is a Sacrament by which we are made Christians, children of God, and members of the Church.

Q. What other grace is given by this Sacrament?

A. It cleanses us from original sin, and also from actual, if we be guilty of any.

Before explaining these answers, let us see what is the meaning of the word *Baptism*, and why that name is given to this Sacrament. Baptism means a *washing* or *cleansing*, for it comes from a Greek word which means to dip or wash. You see what a suitable name it is for that Sacrament in which, while the body is washed outwardly with water, the soul is washed inwardly with the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, and thereby cleansed from the guilt of both original and actual sin.

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Baptism is a Sacrament, the Catechism says. Since, then, it is a Sacrament, it must contain all those things which are necessary to make a Sacrament, namely, *an outward sign, inward grace,* and *institution by our Blessed Lord.* Let us see if we find all these things in the Sacrament of Baptism.

I. First, then, what is the *outward sign?* It is the washing with water, accompanied with the words, "I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." You see there are two things which make up the outward sign—the washing with water and the saying of the words. The one is called the *matter*, the other the *form* of the Sacrament. You will find it the same in the other Sacraments; there is always something done which is called the matter of the Sacrament, and something said which is called its form, and these two things together make up the outward sign.

II. Now let us see what is the *inward grace* which is shown forth and conveyed to the soul by means of this outward sign. It is the interior washing of the soul from sin in the Blood of Jesus Christ, by which we become pleasing to God, instead of being, as before, objects of his Divine wrath. Moreover, we are thereby closely united with our Blessed Lord as members of one body, we are adopted by the heavenly Father as his children, and we are admitted into the Church of Christ with a right to partake of all the graces and spiritual advantages which our Lord has there laid up for the use of the faithful. These, my dear children, are the chief graces conveyed to the soul by Baptism, and they are those of which the Catechism makes special mention in the answers which you have just repeated. As it is of the greatest importance that you should understand thoroughly these effects of the Sacrament of Baptism, I will explain them to you one by one.

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1. In the first place then, Baptism washes away all our sins in the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ; or, to use the words of the Catechism, it *cleanses us from original sin, and also from actual if we be guilty of any.* When our first parents, Adam and Eve, committed that great sin of disobedience in the garden of Paradise by eating of the forbidden fruit, their souls were thereby stripped of the beautiful robe of Divine grace which had been bestowed upon them at their creation, and became covered with the loathsome leprosy of sin, which rendered them hateful in the sight of God, and an object of his just indignation. That black stain of original sin has, as you know, come down to all mankind like a foul blot upon the soul; no one has ever escaped it except the Immaculate Mother of God, and, of course, our Lord himself, who, being Infinite Holiness and Purity, was necessarily incapable of sin. It was to cleanse our souls from this stain that the Son of God was born into the world and died upon the cross, pouring forth for us every drop of his Precious Blood. This he applies to our souls by Baptism, which he has instituted to purify us from original sin, and restore to us the white robe of Divine grace, without which our souls cannot be pleasing in the sight of a most Pure and Holy God. When an infant is baptised, *original sin* is the only sin forgiven, for a little child is not capable of any other; but if it be a grown up person, then *actual sin*, that is, all the sins which he has committed by his own act and deed, are washed away. This wonderful grace, my dear children, which cleanses us from sin, and renders our souls beautiful and pure in the sight of God, is sometimes called *justifying* and sometimes *sanctifying* grace. It is called *justifying* grace because it frees or justifies us from the guilt of sin, and *sanctifying* grace because it makes us pure and holy before God. From

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enemies, it makes us the friends of God; from miserable sinners, incapable of being admitted into the Divine presence, it makes us children of eternal life and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. Can you imagine a greater and more excellent gift?

2. But this is not all. In washing away the guilt of sin by the bestowal of sanctifying grace, Baptism remits also the punishment due to sin. Now the punishment of sin is two-fold, namely, the *eternal* torments of hell, and the *temporal* sufferings which we have to undergo on account of sin, either in this life or in purgatory. Both of these punishments are forgiven in Baptism. It is different in the Sacrament of Penance. There, though the guilt of our actual sins and the eternal punishment due to them are forgiven, a portion, at least, of the temporal punishment generally remains, and it is for this reason that the priest gives us a penance in Confession to help us to pay the debt we owe to God's justice, whereas, in Baptism he gives us no penance, because there is no further debt to pay. Notice, however, that though in Baptism all the punishment due to our sins is remitted, we remain still subject to poverty, sickness, death, and other temporal ills, which are the *consequences* of sin. We are also still tormented by the sting of concupiscence, or the desire of unlawful gratification, which first arose from the sinful indulgence of Adam and Eve in tasting the forbidden fruit. But these afflictions are intended by God not for the punishment of the sins we committed before Baptism, but for our greater merit and reward, since it is by bearing patiently the various trials of life, and fighting generously against the temptations of the flesh, that we prove our love to God, and lay up for ourselves a great reward hereafter.

3. Another great grace bestowed upon us in

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Baptism is that we are made *Christians,* or followers, nay even members of Jesus Christ. For by Baptism we are united to our Blessed Lord in a most close and intimate union, which St. Paul compares to the union of the members or parts of a human body with its head. So we who are baptised become members of Christ, having Him for our chief and head, and being united by a common bond of brotherhood with one another. Hence St. Paul says, "As many of you as are baptised have put on Christ;"* and again, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?"† Our Blessed Lord, in explaining to his apostles the intimate union which we have with him by Baptism, uses a beautiful comparison: "I am the vine," says he, "you the branches."‡ In other words, we are united with him by Baptism as closely as the branches of a tree are united with the parent stem. In the same way as it is from the parent trunk that they derive that sap and nourishment which enables them to produce leaves, and flowers, and fruit, so is it in virtue of this union with Jesus Christ that we are able, as long as we remain abiding in him by faith and charity, to produce that abundant fruit of virtuous actions, which will merit for us the rewards of a blessed eternity. O happy union, which makes us one with Jesus Christ, and renders even our most ordinary actions pleasing and meritorious before God, because they are done in union with his Divine Son and by the power of his Spirit working and abiding in us! Yes, my dear children, to be a Christian is a far higher dignity and a greater happiness than any which the world can bestow.

This noble quality of *Christian*, which is bestowed upon us at our Baptism, is set by Almighty God as a mark and seal upon our souls. It can never be

* Gal. iii. 27. † I. Cor. vi. 15. ‡ John xv. 5, &c.

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effaced, even by mortal sin or by the denial of our faith, for a Christian once, is a Christian for ever, though he may be a faithless and unworthy one; hence, the Sacrament of Baptism cannot be received more than once. At the last day the character of *Christian* will be to our greater glory or our greater condemnation—to our greater glory if we have remained faithful to our Divine Head, and have preserved his love within our hearts; to our greater condemnation if, by dying the death of sin, we have become withered and dead branches of the true vine, fit for nothing else than to be cut down and cast into the fire of hell. "He that abideth not in me," said our Lord, "shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up and cast him in the fire, and he burneth."*

4. But not only are we made by Baptism Christians and members of Jesus Christ, we also become thereby *Children of God.* In other words, the Eternal Father, seeing us clothed, as it were, with his Divine Son, and intimately united with him as members of one body, loves us for his Son's sake, and solemnly adopts us as his children, bestowing upon us all the rights and privileges belonging to so exalted a dignity. Hence our Lord is called in Holy Scripture "The first born amongst many brethren,"† *He* being the Son of God from all eternity by an eternal generation, *we* being made God's children by the second birth of Baptism. Of this great grace the Apostle reminds us when he says, "You have received the spirit of the adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba (Father)!"‡ Oh, happy privilege, which enables us to love and obey the great God of heaven, not only as our Creator and sovereign Lord, but also as our *Father*, and to say with confidence, as

* John xv. † Rom. viii. 29. ‡ Rom. viii. 15.

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our Lord has taught us, "Our Father who art in heaven!" *

5. We are also made by Baptism *members of the Church*, that is to say, of the Catholic Church, which the Son of God has established upon earth to guide us to eternal life. From this it follows that all baptised children belong the Church of God, no matter by whom they have been baptised, as long as the Sacrament has been rightly administered. Hence Baptism is sometimes called the *gate of the Church*, because it admits us into the communion of the faithful, and gives us a title to share in all those graces and privileges which our Blessed Lord has laid up in his Church for the benefit of his disciples. Thus, for example, by Baptism we are rendered capable of receiving the other Sacraments, which would be *invalid*, that is to say, null and void, if received by any one who had not first, by Baptism, became a member of the Church. The only exception to this is in the case of the Blessed Eucharist; an unbaptised person would indeed *truly* receive the Body of our Blessed Lord, but still it would not profit him. For, those who have not first by Baptism been admitted into the body of the Church, can have no right to Sacraments that were ordained by our Blessed Lord expressly for the use of her members.

6. Besides these wonderful effects of the Sacrament of Baptism which I have already explained, there is another very important one, which is not mentioned in the Catechism. This is the most precious gift of the three Theological Virtues—Faith, Hope, and Charity—with which the soul of the newly baptised is endowed. In other words he receives power and grace to believe what God has

* Mat. vi. 9.

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revealed to us by his Church, to hope in him and to love him, and to love his neighbours for the sake of God. Now these are things which we cannot do by our own *natural* power, being far above the reach of mere human nature, unassisted by God's grace. Yet they are absolutely necessary in order to gain eternal life, for the Catechism tells us in the very first chapter, that to save our souls, "we must worship God by Faith, Hope, and Charity." It is in Baptism, my dear children, that Almighty God supplies this necessary want of our souls by giving us a *supernatural* power to exercise these three virtues. It is this which renders it so easy for those who are baptised, to believe the various truths of religion when they are made known to them, to hope in and pray with confidence to God, and to love God, and their neighbour as the creature of God. All these things become, as it were, natural and easy to those who have received Baptism and correspond with its grace, because the habits of these virtues have been bestowed upon them; just as it is easy for a person who has acquired a habit of writing, to write a letter, or for one who has the habit of swimming, to move about in the water. But it is not sufficient, as I told you when explaining the First Commandment, to *possess the habits* of these virtues; we are required by Almighty God to turn to good account these three precious talents which he has entrusted to us, in other words, to exercise these habits by frequent acts.

I have now explained to you, my dear children, the different effects of Baptism, and will repeat them in short.

In the first place, Baptism washes away all sin from the soul, which it clothes with the beautiful white robe of sanctifying grace.

Secondly, it remits all the punishment, both temporal and eternal, that is due to sin.

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Thirdly, it gives us the character of Christians, uniting us most closely to Jesus Christ as members of one body.

Fourthly, it makes us Children of God.

Fifthly, it makes us Members of the Catholic Church.

Lastly, it endows the soul with the habits of the three Theological Virtues — Faith, Hope, and Charity.

III. Having now seen what is the *outward sign*, and what the *inward grace* of Baptism, we come to speak of the third condition necessary to make it a true Sacrament, namely, its *institution by our Blessed Lord.*

We read in the holy Gospel, my dear children, that St. John the Baptist, who was sent before our Lord to prepare the way for him, was accustomed to baptise his disciples in the river Jordan. Thereupon the Jews were at a loss to know whether he might not really be the Messiah; for it seems to have been a tradition among them that his preaching would be accompanied by the rite of baptism. They accordingly sent messengers to ask St. John, whether he was the Christ whom they had been so long expecting. He declared that he was not, upon which they further asked him, "Why, then, dost thou baptise?"* To which St. John made this answer, "I indeed baptise you in water unto penance, but He that shall come after me is mightier than I. He shall baptise you in the Holy Ghost and fire."† From these words we clearly see that the baptism of St. John was only a figure of the Baptism of Jesus Christ, and had not in itself any power of forgiving sin, being simply a mark of that interior cleansing of the heart by sincere penance, which would enable the Jews to receive with profit the grace of our Lord's coming.

* John i. 25. † Matt. iii. 11.

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Among others, who came to St. John to be baptised in the waters of the Jordan, was our Blessed Redeemer himself, who, out of profound humility and for our instruction and example, would submit to the humiliating ceremony of Baptism, as he had previously done to that of Circumcision. St. John, filled with humble confusion at being called upon to baptise Him who was Holiness itself, at first hesitated, saying, "I ought to be baptised by thee, and comest thou to me?" However, upon our Lord's insisting, he at length obeyed, and baptised his Divine master. Upon this occasion it is recorded that the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God descended upon the head of Jesus in the form of a dove, while the voice of the Heavenly Father was heard from above, saying, "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."* It was at this time probably that our Blessed Lord, by the contact of his most pure body, gave to the element of water the power of washing away the sins of men; while on the other hand, the visible presence of the three Persons of the Adorable Trinity showed that this Sacrament was to be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Immediately after his baptism in the Jordan our Blessed Lord entered upon his public preaching, and we learn from St. John that he came with his disciples "into the land of Judea, and there he abode with them, and *baptised*."† It is very probable that he administered this Sacrament to his Blessed Mother and his twelve Apostles before all others; for it is natural to suppose that those so dear to him would be the first to receive this sacred rite from the hands of their Divine Master. About the same time he declared to his disciple Nicodemus that it was

* Matt. iii. 14, &c. † John iii. 22.

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absolutely necessary for all who wished to enter heaven to receive this Sacrament. "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."*

Finally, when our Lord was about to quit this world and return to his Heavenly Father, he solemnly committed to his Apostles and their successors the administration of this Sacrament, and gave them his last instructions as to the manner of conferring it. "All power," said he, "is given to me in heaven and in earth, going therefore teach ye all nations; *baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"† From that moment the Sacrament of Baptism became of the strictest obligation, being then solemnly announced to the world as a condition necessary for all who desired to be enrolled among the disciples of Jesus Christ. Hence we find that when the Apostles went forth to preach, their first care was to administer this Sacrament to those whom they converted. Thus, upon occasion of St. Peter's first sermon, when many of the Jews were touched with compunction for their sins and cried out to him, "What shall we do to obtain pardon and salvation?" he made answer, "Do penance, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."‡

Q. Can no one but a priest baptise?

A. In case of necessity, when a priest cannot be had, anyone may baptise.

The bishops and priests of the Church are the ordinary ministers of Baptism, since it is to them, as we have just seen, that our Lord has especially committed the charge of administering this Sacrament.

* John iii. 5. † Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. ‡ Acts ii. 38.

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Our Blessed Redeemer, however, knowing the absolute necessity of Baptism for salvation, and the danger to which many, especially infants, would be exposed of dying without it if none but a priest could baptise, has given every one *power* to confer this Sacrament, and has, moreover, *permitted* that *in a case of necessity, when a priest cannot be had, anyone may baptise.* In all other cases it would be a grievous sin for anyone to usurp an office, which properly belongs to those whom St. Paul calls "The ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."*

You see, therefore, that Baptism is *valid*, in other words, is a real Sacrament, by whomsoever it is administered, whether by a man or a woman, a Catholic or a Protestant, a Jew or an infidel. There is no exception as long as Baptism is properly given, and the person who baptises has the intention of performing the sacred rite which the Church believes in. It is proper, however, that, when Baptism is to be administered by a lay person, a man should baptise rather than a woman, and a Catholic rather than a heretic or infidel. Moreover, the father and the mother should not baptise their own children, if it can be avoided. It is, however, necessary that someone should be chosen who knows well how to baptise; and it is better that a woman, a heretic, or even a parent should baptise, than that there should be any danger of the Sacrament not being properly conferred. In all cases where Baptism is administered privately through some necessity, the child should afterwards be taken to the Church, in order that the usual ceremonies may be supplied, and its name enrolled in the Baptismal register.

You will wonder, perhaps, why it is, since Baptism

* I. Cor. iv. 1.

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is a real Sacrament by whomever it is given, that the Church requires those who have been baptised by a Protestant minister, to be baptised over again when they become Catholics. My dear children, they are not really baptised over again, for Baptism cannot be given twice, and if they have already been properly baptised, there is a mark set upon their souls that can never be effaced. It is for fear of their never having been baptised that the Church orders the necessary part of Baptism to be performed again; but it is only done *conditionally*, that is, in case there has been any mistake in the former Baptism. Hence the priest says, when he pours the water, "If thou art not baptised, I baptise thee, &c.," that is to say, "I have no intention of baptising thee if thou art already properly baptised, but only in case thou hast not yet received this Sacrament." Important mistakes very often occur when Baptism is given by heretics, for most of them do not believe that this Sacrament is necessary for salvation, and are therefore frequently careless in their manner of administering it. When Quakers or Unitarians are converted to the Catholic faith *they* are baptised without any condition and with all the ceremonies, because *they* certainly have never been baptised, as they do not believe in or practise the rite of Baptism.

Q. How is Baptism given?

A. By pouring water on the head of the child, whilst we pronounce the words ordained by Christ.

Q. What are those words?

A. "I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

As it may easily happen that any one of you may be called upon some time in your lives to baptise a child in danger of death, it is most important that

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you should be well instructed how to administer the Sacrament. The Catechism teaches you this in these two answers which I will explain to you, along with the obligations, necessity and ceremonies of Baptism in the next instruction.

There is a beautiful history related in the Lives of the Saints which shows the wonderful effects produced in the soul by this Sacrament or, in a case of necessity, by the sincere desire of receiving it. As it will help you better to remember the subject of this day's lesson, I will now relate it to you.

THE COMEDIAN CONVERTED.

In the reign of the Emperor Dioclesian there lived at Rome a comic actor named Genesius, who was a pagan by birth. Being chosen among others to perform a comedy in presence of the Emperor, who was well known to be a cruel persecutor of the Church, he took upon himself to ridicule the mysteries of the Christian religion, of which he had learnt something from certain friends who professed the faith. Accordingly, lying down on the stage and pretending to be sick, he exclaimed, "Alas! my friends, I feel a heavy weight upon me, and would gladly be relieved." "But what," said his companions, "shall we do to give thee ease? Shall we scrape thee with a joiner's plane to make thee lighter?" "Fools," said he, "I am resolved to die a Christian, that God may receive me on the day of my death." Upon this a priest and an exorcist, that is, two players who represented them, were summoned. These having taken their seats beside the sick man's bed, the priest began to converse with him, saying, "Well, my child, why did you send for us?"

At this moment a sudden ray of Divine grace, like that which converted the Apostle St. Paul, illuminated the soul of Genesius, and he was changed into another man. No longer in jest. but with a lively faith, he replied, "I have sent for you because I desire to receive the grace of Jesus Christ, and to be born again, that I may be delivered from my sins." The other players then went through the various ceremonies of Baptism, after which, according to custom, they clothed him with a white garment. Thereupon certain actors in the garb of soldiers, to carry on the jest, seized and dragged him before the Emperor, accusing him of being a convert to the

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Christian religion. To the astonishment of the assembled multitude, Genesius now openly professed himself a disciple of Jesus Christ, and declared himself ready to suffer every torment rather than abandon the faith.

"Hear, O Emperor, and all ye that are present," said he, "I never yet so much as heard the name of a Christian but I was struck with horror, and I detested my very relations because they professed that religion. I informed myself exactly concerning its rites and mysteries, only that I might more heartily despise it, and inspire you with contempt for the same. But whilst I was being washed with water and questioned, I had no sooner answered sincerely that I believed, than I saw a company of bright angels over my head, who read aloud out of a book all the sins I had committed from my childhood, and, having afterwards plunged the book into the water which had been poured upon me in your presence, showed it to me with its pages white as snow. Wherefore I advise you, O great Emperor, and all ye people, who have ridiculed these mysteries, to believe with me that Jesus Christ is the true Lord, that he is the Light and the Truth, and that it is through him alone that you can obtain pardon of your sins."

Upon this noble confession Dioclesian, exceedingly enraged, ordered him to be most inhumanly beaten with clubs, and afterwards placed in the hands of the executioners for further torture. Being extended on the rack, he was cruelly torn with iron hooks, and burning torches were applied to various parts of his body. But in the midst of all his torments, which he endured with the utmost constancy, he continued to cry out, "There is no other Lord of the universe but Jesus Christ. Him I adore and serve, and to him I will adhere, though I suffer a thousand deaths for his sake." At length his head was struck off and thus he completed his glorious martyrdom. *Butler's Saints' Lives.*

HEROIC PROFESSION OF FAITH.

The venerable Peter Ou, who suffered for the faith in China in the year 1814, being arrested and brought before the pagan judge, the latter sought by every means to induce him to trample on the cross in token of his apostacy. "What harm," added the mandarin, "can there be in this? When you leave the court you can be a Christian if you choose as you were before." "Great mandarin," replied the martyr, "you have spoken the truth, though you know it not. The character of

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a Christian is indeed indelible. He may violate his law, he may deny his God, but the seal of Baptism remains on him for ever. Know, however, that the soul of a Christian may be compared to a piece of new linen, as white as snow. Take this linen and dye it; can you ever restore it to its original whiteness? Were I so unhappy as to obey your impious order, this would be the condition of my soul. I might, indeed, wash away by tears the stain with which my soul would be disfigured in the sight of the most perfect God whom I adore, but the freshness of its first innocence would be for ever tarnished by the recollection of my ingratitude. My life is in your hands, dispose of it as you please, but it is useless to tempt me any longer to deny my faith or to renounce a worship which I love from the bottom of my heart."

This noble profession of faith was shortly followed by sentence of death, the generous confessor being condemned to be strangled. On arriving at the place of execution, he seemed as if unable to contain the joy that penetrated him. With eyes filled with tears, he cried out, "Heaven is open before me; there, is my country, I see its glory. Yes, my Saviour, I now see thee in reality. Do not you perceive the God whom I adore; another moment and I shall behold him in all his glory. Hasten," said he to the executioner, "to procure me this happiness." With these words on his lips the fatal cord was drawn, and his soul flew to heaven to receive its crown.—*Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.*

THIRD INSTRUCTION.

Baptism continued. Manner of Baptising. Obligations, Necessity, and Ceremonies of Baptism.

We come now to a most important question, namely, *how to baptise.* If you are well instructed on this point, my dear children, you may perhaps one day be the happy means of opening the gates of heaven to some poor child who might otherwise, in the absence of a priest, be in danger of dying without receiving this most necessary Sacrament.

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Q. How is Baptism given?

A. By pouring water on the head of the child, whilst we pronounce the words ordained by Christ.

Q. What are those words?

A. "I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Yes, Baptism is given *by pouring water on the head of the child*, and saying at the same time the words, *I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* It will not do to pour the water first, and then to say the words; nor will it do to say the words first, and afterwards to pour the water. Both must be done at one and the same time; the words must be said while the water is being poured, and the water must be poured while the words are pronounced. And why so, my dear children? For a very simple reason, namely, because our Blessed Lord has so ordained it. Moreover, it is by saying the words, "I baptise, &c.," that you show that what you are doing is not intended merely to cleanse the body, but to wash the soul from sin in the name of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. It is upon *the head of the child* that the water should be poured, because the head is the principal and most important part of the human body, and therefore represents the whole. Indeed, if the water were poured only upon the hand or the foot, it would be doubtful whether Baptism had been properly given, and it would have to be repeated conditionally.

In the early ages of the Church Baptism was usually given by *immersion*, that is, by dipping the whole body in water, except in the case of infants or sick people, who were baptised in the same manner as at present. At that time, when the Gospel was being first preached to infidel nations, it was mostly grown up people, converted to the faith, who were

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baptised, and it was usual to put off the Baptism of those who were born of Christian parents until they were sufficiently advanced in years to be fully instructed in the truths and obligations of the Christian religion. Until that time they were enrolled in the class of *Catechumens*, that is to say, of persons under instruction, and were by degrees made acquainted with the sacred mysteries of religion, and prepared for the solemn reception of Baptism, which was usually administered upon the eve of Easter or of Whitsunday. When the great day arrived, their instruction was completed by the reading of the prophecies and lessons, which are still found in the Church Service appointed for those days. The catechumens, being thus prepared, were conducted to the Baptistry, which was a room adjoining the church, containing a bath suitable for immersion, into which the candidates were conducted down a flight of steps by the priest and their sponsors. On coming forth from the sacred font, they were clothed in white robes, in token of their Baptismal innocence. These they wore during the following eight days; whence it is that the Sunday after Easter is still known by the name of *Dominica in Albis*, that is to say, *the Sunday of white garments*, this being the last day on which the newly baptised assisted at the Holy Sacrifice in the white robes of their Baptism.

In place of the ancient Baptistries which I have described to you, you now see in our churches a stone or marble basin, surrounded by a railing, which is called the Baptismal Font. It is there that Baptism is now administered, for it is no longer given by immersion but by *infusion*, that is to say, by pouring water on the head of the child or grown up person in the manner I have taught you. Moreover, the custom of deferring Baptism till later in life is done away with, the Church having ordained that all

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children should be baptised within a few days after birth. This she has done to prevent the grievous danger, to which many formerly were exposed, of dying unbaptised, either through the fault of their parents or their own neglect in deferring the reception of this Sacrament till they were attacked by dangerous sickness, or were even at the point of death. Hence parents are now bound, under a strict obligation to bring their children to be baptised within a short time after birth. If they neglect to do so, or wilfully delay the Baptism of their children, even it is thought, beyond ten or twelve days, they are guilty of a grievous sin, of which they are bound to accuse themselves when they come to confession.

There is a third way of baptising, namely, by *aspersion* or the sprinkling of water, but this is never used now, as being less secure. It was probably sometimes employed in former ages, in cases where large multitudes of converts were to be baptised in a short time: for example, when the three and the five thousand men were converted by the two first sermons of St. Peter; but the usual method of baptising in the first ages of the Church was by immersion. Of this we have an example in the history of the

BAPTISM OF THE EUNUCH BY THE DEACON ST. PHILIP.

"An angel of the Lord," says the sacred writer, "spoke to Philip, saying, *Arise, go towards the south, to the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza.* And rising up he went. And behold a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge over all her treasures, had come to Jerusalem to adore. And he was returning sitting in his chariot, and reading Isaias the prophet. And the Spirit said to Philip, *Go near and join thyself to this chariot.* And Philip running thither, heard him reading from the Prophet Isaias, and he said, *Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest?* Who said, *And how can I, unless some man show me?* And he desired Philip that he should come up, and sit with him.

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"And the place of the Scripture which he was reading was this, *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb without voice before his shearer so openeth he not his mouth.* And the eunuch, answering Philip, said, *I beseech thee, of whom doth the prophet speak this, of himself or of some other man?* Then Philip opening his mouth, and beginning at this scripture, preached unto him Jesus.

"And as they went their way, they came to a certain water, and the eunuch said, *See, here is water, what doth hinder me from being baptised?* And Philip said, *If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest.* And he answering said, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* And he commanded the chariot to stand still. And they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more. And he went on his way rejoicing."—*Acts* viii.

You all know, my dear children, that Baptism can be given only with water, *natural water*, such as we find in the sea, the rivers, the springs, the lakes or the ponds. No other liquid, nor any kind of artificial water will suffice.

Q. What do we promise in Baptism?

A. To renounce the devil, and all his works and pomps.

In Baptism we promise to God, in return for so many precious graces which he bestows upon us, that we on our part will give up all that may lead us to be unfaithful to our duties as Christians; in other words, we engage to *renounce the devil with all his works and pomps.* By the *works* of the devil we mean sin, because it is his daily and constant work to lead us to offend God. By his *pomps* we mean the empty vanities and deceitful pleasures of the world, which are the means which he makes use of to draw us into sin. All these we solemnly promise to renounce and shun; and as we are not then able, on account of our tender age, to speak or act for ourselves, our

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Godfather and Godmother answer for us, undertaking in our name those obligations which are necessary to enable us to receive the precious grace of Baptism. Hence it is that our Godfather and Godmother are sometimes called our *Sponsors*, a sponsor being one who promises in the name of another. When we are old enough to understand the engagements which our Sponsors have undertaken in our name, we should ourselves confirm and ratify them, but above all we should be ever careful to make them the guiding rule of our lives. These solemn promises which we make to God in Baptism, are usually called our *Baptismal vows*, and it is a pious custom among many Christians to renew them on the anniversary of their Baptism, or when they approach to the holy Sacraments. It is the duty of our Sponsors to watch, as far as they can, over our fidelity to these engagements, and to see, as we grow up, that we are instructed in the truths of religion and the Divine Commandments. It is, indeed, our earthly parents who are bound before all others to instruct us in the truths of religion and train us up in the practice of virtue and piety, but in case *they* neglect this duty, then our Godfather and Godmother, as our spiritual guardians, must if possible supply their place, and instruct us, or see that we are instructed in our religion and the duty which we owe to God and our fellow men. Hence it is not every one who is fitted to be a sponsor in Baptism, and those only should be chosen to fill this important office who are likely to discharge its obligations with zeal and fidelity. For this reason the Church has forbidden that heretics, public sinners, or those who are themselves ignorant of, or negligent in the practice of their religion, should be admitted to this office. Neither ought parents to act as sponsors for their own children, for a *Godfather* should be distinct from an

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earthly father, and the spiritual relationship contracted in this Sacrament should be kept quite apart from the natural tie which already exists between a child and those who have given him birth. For though of a sacred character, the tie which is contracted in Baptism between the two Sponsors themselves, and also between them and the child or its parents, is in the eyes of the Church a real relationship, such as would prohibit and annul marriage between any of the parties.

BAPTISM OF KING CLOVIS.

Towards the end of the sixth century the whole of Gaul, or modern France, fell under the power of a German race called the Franks, who gave their name to the country. At that time they were under the command of King Clovis, who was yet a pagan, though he had married a virtuous Christian princess named St. Clotildis. The latter laboured earnestly and prayed continually for the conversion of her husband, who, though fierce and hasty like the race to which he belonged, was possessed of a noble disposition and generous heart. All her efforts however appeared unavailing.

It happened at length that Clovis was on the point of marching forth to a decisive engagement with a neighbouring nation, who had been for some time threatening his kingdom. Clotildis on this occasion renewed her entreaties, and exhorted her husband, if hard pressed by his enemies, to call on the God of the Christians, and promise to renounce the abominations of idolatry. He did so and was victorious, upon which he at once placed himself, along with his principal nobles, under the instructions of St. Remigius the Archbishop of Rheims, to be prepared for the Sacrament of Baptism. The solemn festival of Christmas was chosen by the Saint for the celebration of the sacred rite, and the king, laying aside his crown and royal robes, and covering himself with ashes, spent the intervening time in fervent prayer and works of penance. Meanwhile the neighbouring Bishops assembled to assist at the sacred ceremony, and the cathedral at Rheims was adorned for the occasion with the richest hangings and innumerable wax tapers by the piety and liberality of St. Clotildis.

The day having at length arrived, Clovis and his attendant

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nobles were baptised with the greatest solemnity in presence of a countless multitude. On arriving at the sacred font, the holy Bishop, turning to the king, thus addressed him: "Bow down thy head with meekness, great Sicambrian Prince. Henceforth adore what you have burned, and burn what you have hitherto adored." He then conferred upon him the Sacrament of Baptism, which the king received with the deepest sentiments of humility and contrition. Faithful to the sacred engagements which he had made at the Baptismal Font, Clovis spent the remainder of his reign in labouring earnestly for the conversion not only of his own subjects, but also of the neighbouring princes.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

My dear children, let us learn a lesson from the words of St. Remigius to King Clovis: "Henceforth adore what you have burned, and burn what you have hitherto adored." Before Baptism we were by original sin slaves of the devil, and enemies to Jesus Christ. Henceforth we must renounce the devil with all his works and pomps, and be true Christians, faithful servants of our Divine Lord. Before Baptism we were under the dominion of self-love and concupiscence, which is the desire of sinful indulgence. Being made children of God by Baptism, we must henceforth in all our actions be ruled by Divine love, and generously trample under foot the temptations and allurements of the flesh. In a word, being spiritually born again, and risen, as St. Paul says, from the grave of sin as our Lord rose from the tomb on Easter day, we must like him lead a new life, that is, a life of union with God, a life of Divine love, dying now no more the death of mortal sin. Oh, how happy should we be, if we could carry the white robe of Baptismal innocence unspotted before the judgment seat of God, like a St. Aloysius, a St. Stanislaus, and many other saints! If, however, unhappily, we have already soiled it by wilful sin, let us not despair, but let us wash away those stains as far as possible in tears of true repentance, and

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earnestly implore of God to assist us by his grace to be more faithful in future to the sacred engagements which we have made to him on the day of our Baptism.

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES AND THE BAPTISMAL FONT.

St. Francis of Sales, when yet a child, was distinguished alike for his lively and cheerful disposition and for his sincere piety. At one time he would join with all the ardour of youth in the games and amusements of his playmates; at another he would gather them about him, and with a sweet and engaging air tell them some pious story, or prevail upon them to join him in his prayers. Sometimes he would lead them to the parish church, and arrange them in a circle around the sacred font, where they had in infancy received the Sacrament of Baptism. "See, my dear companions," he would then say to them, "this is a spot which ought to be dearer to us than any other in the whole world, for here it was that we were made children of God. Come, let us sing together the *Glory be to the Father* in thanksgiving to God for his Infinite Goodness to us!" The little band would then join in singing this verse of thanksgiving, and would afterwards on bended knee respectfully kiss the font.—*Life of St. Francis of Sales.*

Q. Is Baptism necessary for Salvation?

A. Yes; for Christ says: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—*John* iii. 5.

Of all the Sacraments, my dear children, Baptism is the most *necessary for salvation*, since our Lord has expressly declared that *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* We must become the children of God, by the second birth of Baptism, or we have no right or title to be admitted to the home of our Heavenly Father. The want of Baptism may, however, in certain cases be supplied by the ardent desire of receiving it. Thus many of the martyrs were put to death for the faith in some sudden outbreak of

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persecution without having been baptised, and yet they are justly esteemed and honoured as saints. Of such it is sometimes said that they were baptised in their own blood ; not that they were really baptised, but that their perfect love of God, shown by the shedding of their blood for his sake, was accepted in place of Baptism, inasmuch as it included the desire of this Sacrament as well as of the fulfilment of every duty. Such was the case of the martyr St. Genesius, which I have related to you, and of others of whom we read in the Lives of the Saints. We also find many instances recorded of the Goodness of God in providing by a miracle for the Baptism of those, who were animated with an ardent desire of receiving this most necessary Sacrament. Thus when SS. Peter and Paul converted their jailors and fellow-captives in the Marmertine prison, a miraculous spring of water, which is yet shown, issued from the rock, by means of which they were enabled to baptise the band of converts in preparation for their approaching martyrdom. Another remarkable instance of the Divine Goodness in regard to the conferring of this Sacrament is recorded in the Life of St. Martin of Tours.

THE CATECHUMEN RAISED TO LIFE.

The great St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, who lived in the fourth century, is said to have been the founder of the first regular monastery erected in the kingdom of France. In this monastery, which was situated in the neighbourhood of Poitiers, he placed a young pagan, for the purpose of being instructed in the truths of the Christian religion, previous to his Baptism. Soon after, it happened that St. Martin was obliged to set out upon a journey, and during his three days' absence the young man fell ill of a fever, and being suddenly reduced to the last extremity, died without being baptised.

Upon his return to the monastery, St. Martin found the monks plunged in the deepest affliction at this unhappy event, and on the point of proceeding to the funeral of the

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deceased. He immediately repaired to the cell in which the body was laid out, ready for burial. Upon beholding it, he burst into tears, and feeling himself inspired by God to work a miracle, ordered all who were present to retire from the chamber. Then, like another Eliseus, he stretched himself upon the corpse, and earnestly besought Almighty God to show mercy to the deceased, and to restore him to life, in order that his soul might be washed from sin in the waters of Baptism. His prayer was heard, and the soul, which had already passed before the judgment seat of God, returned to the body of the youth, who by degrees began to open his eyes, and move his limbs, until, at the end of two hours, he arose and stood before the holy Bishop alive and well.

When questioned afterwards as to what had befallen him after death, the youth related that no sooner had his soul left the body, than he appeared to be presented before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge, who condemned him to be confined in a frightful dungeon. Thereupon two angels stood forth and represented to the Judge that St. Martin was pouring forth his prayers in behalf of the condemned soul, upon which the Judge ordered her to be restored to the body, which was immediately raised to life. The young man was at once baptised, and lived for many years afterwards.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

There are many beautiful ceremonies, my dear children, which accompany the solemn and public administration of Baptism, and which have been instituted by the Church partly to inspire us with greater reverence for so holy a Sacrament, and partly to show forth the fruits which it produces in the soul. Some of the principal of these I will explain to you, that when you happen to see a child baptised, you may understand the meaning of what is done, and may be reminded both of the obligations which you have undertaken at the sacred font and the graces which you have there received.

The child, having been brought to the door of the church, accompanied by his sponsors, is there met by the priest, who questions him as to what he desires to receive from the Church of God, to which the Godfather and Godmother, who always answer in his

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name, reply, that he desires *Faith, which leads to life everlasting.* The priest reminds him that faith is not sufficient without the Love of God and the keeping of the Divine Commandments, after which he breathes upon the child, bidding the devil depart, in imitation of our Blessed Lord who breathed upon his apostles to communicate to them the Holy Spirit. He then signs him with the sign of the cross upon his breast and forehead, to show that it is not sufficient to believe in our hearts the Divine teaching, but that we must also profess our faith boldly before mankind. He places a little salt within the mouth of the child, praying that he may be imbued with true wisdom, of which salt is the sign or symbol. Afterwards he exorcises the child to destroy within it the power of the devil, who by the sin of our first parents and our own sins has acquired a certain dominion over the creation, whence he is called by our Blessed Lord the "prince of this world."* All these ceremonies are performed at the church door, because the unbaptised have no right to enter into the church of God.

After this, the priest, placing the end of his stole upon the child, introduces him into the church, requiring, however, a proof of sufficient instruction by the recital of the Apostles' Creed and the Our Father, which the catechumen himself, if a grown up person, or, if not, the sponsors recite in the child's name along with the priest. After a second exorcism before approaching to the font, the priest touches the ears and nostrils of the child with spittle, in imitation of our Lord who put his fingers into the ears of the deaf and dumb man, and spitting, touched his tongue, adding the word, *Ephpheta*, which is, *Be thou opened.*† This same word the priest addresses to

* John xiv. 30. † Mark vii. 32, &c.

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the child, praying that his ears may be ever open to the voice of God, and that he may smell the sweet odour of Jesus by the imitation of his virtues. Then follow the solemn promises made by the child, to renounce the devil with all his works and pomps, after which the priest anoints him with the Baptismal oil, and conducts him to the font. There he requires from the child a solemn profession of faith in the principal mysteries of religion, and finally questions him as to his desire to be baptised, for, as man by the abuse of his free will fell from God, so must he correspond of his own accord to the grace which is to restore him to the Divine favour. The sponsors having answered for the child, the priest then baptises him with the baptismal water, which is mixed with the sacred oils and blessed for the purpose on Holy Saturday. In pouring the water on the child's head he makes three times the form of the cross, once at the name of each Person of the Holy Trinity, and this rule should as far as possible be carried out in private Baptism ; meanwhile he pronounces the usual form of words. In baptising the child, the priest addresses him by the Christian name which he is to bear in after life. This should not be a profane or fanciful name, but the name of a Saint or holy Scriptural person, of one, in fact, whom the child can afterwards look up to for protection, and whose virtues he can make the object of his imitation.

The little infant, now rescued from the power of Satan, and made a child of God, is, in token of its royal dignity as the adopted son of the Supreme King and heir to a heavenly kingdom, anointed on the top of the head with the Sacred Chrism, used by the Church in the consecration of kings and priests. A white linen cloth is then placed over him in token of his baptismal innocence, and in memory of the white garments formerly worn by the newly baptised

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during the octave of their Baptism. At the same time the priest addresses to him these beautiful and impressive words, on which we ought frequently to reflect: *Receive this white garment, and see that thou carry it without stain before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life. Amen.* Finally, he places in his hand a lighted taper, to signify the light of Divine Faith and the fire of holy Charity, equally necessary to enable us to please God. *Receive*, says the priest, *this burning light, and keep thy Baptism so as to be without blame: keep the Commandments of God, that when the Lord shall come to the nuptials, thou mayest meet him in the company of all the Saints in the heavenly court, and have eternal life, and live for ever and ever.—Amen.*

Such, my dear children, are the principal ceremonies of Baptism, which you should never witness without the deepest sentiments of faith, reverence, love and gratitude. They remind you of the high dignity to which you have been raised as children of God, and heirs to a heavenly kingdom, and they teach you never to act in a manner unworthy of so noble a calling. They speak to you of the infinite love of our dear Lord, who applies to your souls in Baptism his own most Precious Blood to wash away your sins and make you one with him. They bring back before your minds the solemn engagement which you yourselves have undertaken by the mouth of your sponsors at the Baptismal font, namely, to renounce for ever the devil with his works and pomps, and they bid you to reflect whether you are living up to the promises you then made. Finally, they remind you that the day is rapidly approaching, when the great Judge of all mankind shall demand from you the white robe of innocence, bestowed upon you on the day of your Baptism, which you must present

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before him unspotted and unsullied—either pure as on the day when you first received it from him at the sacred font, or at least cleansed and purified from the stains of actual sin by the tears of true repentance.

MAURITA AND EPIDOPHORUS.

It is related in the history of the Church that Maurita, a holy deacon of Carthage, having baptised a young man named Epidophorus, had the affliction to see him afterwards become an apostate and even a persecutor of the Christians. Whilst this impious man, who had been raised to the dignity of a judge, was one day sitting in judgment upon the faithful, Maurita made his appearance, carrying in his hand the white garment with which he had clothed Epidophorus in Baptism. Raising it up before him, he said in the hearing of the whole assembly, "Behold, O minister of error, this white garment which I have carefully preserved. It will be thy accuser, and the witness of thy apostacy on the last day before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge. When thou camest from Baptism, washed and purified from thy sins, it served thee as an ornament; but hereafter it shall be to thee a garment of fire, to torment thee for all eternity!" When Maurita had concluded, the greater part of the assembly were moved to tears, and Epidophorus, rising from his tribunal, retired in confusion.—*Power's Catechism.*

FOURTH INSTRUCTION.

Confirmation. Its Nature, Effects, and Institution. Minister of Confirmation. Dispositions required. Accompanying Ceremonies.

As the new born infant must, in order to become a useful member of society, increase in strength and growth to perfect manhood, so must the Christian, who in Baptism has received a second birth and

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become God's child, grow in Divine grace and acquire fresh spiritual strength, that he may be able to overcome the dangers that beset him, and fulfil perfectly the duties of a Christian life. This increase of grace, this interior strength are given to us in the Sacrament of Confirmation, which our Blessed Lord has instituted to complete the work begun in Baptism; in other words, to make us not Christians only, but *perfect* Christians, not merely God's children, but his *soldiers*, ready in his name to engage and conquer all the powers of hell. Let us now see what Confirmation is, and how it fulfils the conditions necessary to make it one of the seven Sacraments.

Q. What is Confirmation?

A. Confirmation is a sacrament by which we receive the Holy Ghost, in order to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Confirmation, as the catechism says, *is a Sacrament*, and it is so because in it, by the application of an outward sign instituted by our Blessed Lord for the purpose, an interior grace, namely, the Holy Ghost himself, is given to the soul of the receiver.

I. In the first place, then, there is *an outward or visible sign*, showing forth the interior and invisible grace which is thereby conferred. This outward sign consists, as in Baptism, of two parts—the anointing of the forehead with the holy Chrism, and the pronouncing at the same time of the words, "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, I confirm thee with the Chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The anointing with Chrism is called the *matter* and the saying of the words the *form* of the Sacrament, both together making up the outward sign. Moreover, this outward sign signifies and shows forth the grace of the Holy Ghost which is received interiorly; for

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as oil strengthens the body to which it is applied, and by its nature flows through and saturates many of the substances which it touches, so does the grace of the Holy Ghost become diffused through and fill the soul of the worthy receiver, strengthening and invigorating her with a supernatural courage and power. In like manner, the words which the Bishop pronounces show forth the interior effects of the Sacrament, namely, to enrol us under the banner of the cross with which we are signed upon the forehead, and to confirm and strengthen us interiorly in the name of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

II. Now let us examine more particularly what is the *inward grace* that is bestowed upon us in Confirmation. It is, as the catechism says, *the Holy Ghost*, who is given to us in this Sacrament *in order to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ.* But how does the Holy Spirit accomplish this great work within us? It is by enlightening the darkness of our understanding and healing the corruption of our will. For these, my dear children, namely, the understanding and the will, are the two great powers of the human soul. When our first parents, Adam and Eve, committed the first sin by eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Paradise both these powers received a deadly wound, the *understanding* being obscured and rendered less capable of comprehending Divine truth, and the *will* being corrupted, becoming thereby less willing to obey the Commandments of God. These grievous wounds of the soul have been much increased by our own actual sins, and they are at the root of all the guilt and misery that is to be found in the world. Now, Confirmation is given to us by our Blessed Lord to repair this evil, for therein he gives us his Holy Spirit to fill our souls with heavenly light, and to heal the corruption and strengthen the weakness of

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our will. Hence it is that this Sacrament is called *Confirmation*, for what is to *confirm*, but to render firm and strong?

If you wish, my dear children, to see the effects produced on the soul by the Sacrament of Confirmation, look at the Apostles who received the same Holy Spirit, in tongues of fire, on Whitsunday, whom *we* receive when we are anointed by the Bishop with the Holy Chrism. From ignorant and dull of understanding, they became suddenly enlightened with Divine light, and filled with heavenly knowledge; from being weak and timid, so that they all fled away from our Blessed Lord when he was apprehended in the garden, they became, in a moment, heroic confessors of the Faith, ready to endure every torment, and death itself, for the name of Jesus. It is true that they also received other graces which are not granted to us, namely, the gift of tongues and the power of working miracles; but these extraordinary graces were given to them for a special purpose, namely, to enable them to preach the Gospel to different nations, and to establish, by miracles, the truth of their doctrine. Similar graces have been likewise granted at various times to apostolic missionaries, who have preached the Gospel to heathen nations, for example, to St. Francis Xavier, St. Peter Claver and others, and these gifts were bestowed upon them by the same Holy Spirit, who gives to each that measure of grace which is necessary to enable him to accomplish what God requires from him. As for us, *we* have no need of such extraordinary graces, all that *we* require is a certain heavenly light and inward strength which will enable us to know and to fulfil the will of God in our regard, and thus to work out our salvation. The fulfilment of God's will was, indeed, what made the Apostles saints, not the miraculous gifts which were

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entrusted to them for the benefit of those to whom they preached. Now, this twofold grace is given in Confirmation to all Christians, in proportion to the excellence of the dispositions with which they approach to this holy Sacrament. Purity of soul, a lively faith, and an ardent desire of receiving the Divine Spirit are the chief dispositions required ; for the Holy Ghost loves to communicate himself to those who prepare for him a fitting dwelling-place. Upon such he bestows with lavish Bounty those seven gifts enumerated by St. Paul, which are far more precious than all the treasures of the world. And what are these gifts, my dear children ? They are Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge, Fortitude, Godliness and the Fear of the Lord. By the first four of these gifts the Holy Spirit enlightens the *understanding*, and by the last three he strengthens and confirms the *will*. Thus, by the gift of *Understanding*, he illumines and strengthens our faith, teaching us to feel and relish Divine truths ; by *Wisdom* he opens our minds and hearts to the sublime mysteries of religion, helping us to see and admire the Power, Goodness and Wisdom of God, as displayed therein ; by *Knowledge* he shows us the same perfections in the works of the Creation and God's daily Providence ; and lastly, by *Counsel* he enables us to direct our actions by the rules of Christian prudence, so as to make all that we do serve to the glory of God and the salvation of men. Thus by means of these four excellent gifts he removes from our souls the veil of darkness and ignorance with which the devil has obscured the light of faith, and he enables us to see to walk aright on our way to heaven. But our *will* is also weak and infirm ; we are apt to stumble on our road, and fall an easy prey to the snares and temptations of Satan. To remedy this evil he bestows on us the

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gift of *Fortitude*, which enables us generously to face the dangers, to bear the trials, and to overcome the difficulties that beset us ; also, the *Fear of the Lord*, which is a filial fear of offending God, that casts out of our souls all earthly fear and all human respect ; and finally, the gift of *Godliness*, or Piety, which is a loving yearning of the heart to God and holy things. Thus does the Holy Spirit regulate and heal our will, disordered and corrupted by original sin, and enable us to unite it to the most Holy, and Adorable, and Perfect Will of God.*

These seven precious gifts of the Holy Ghost are bestowed on all who worthily receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, in the same way as the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity are implanted in the soul by Baptism ; their effects, however, are only visible according as circumstances require their special exercise. Thus they are like *habits*, infused into the soul, rendering it more easy for us to be prudent, wise, courageous, &c., as occasion requires, and giving us a title to the special helps which we may at any time stand in need of to exercise these virtues. So that, for example, we should not be afraid if we were called upon, as our forefathers often were, to confess our Faith before persecutors, or even to suffer torments and death for Jesus Christ ; since the Holy Spirit will always be ready to assist us to do and suffer what God requires of us, and the more so, in proportion as we have corresponded with the grace of our Confirmation. This title to the actual graces which we need throughout life to fulfil the end which our Lord had in view in bestowing the Holy Ghost upon us, is what is called the *sacramental* grace of Confirmation. There is also in this, as in all the other Sacraments, a fresh degree of *sanctifying*

* See Butler's Feasts and Fasts—Whitsunday.

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grace bestowed upon us, by which we are purified from venial sin, and the union which we have with God by Baptism is increased and perfected. Finally, this Sacrament, as well as Baptism and Holy Orders, imprints on the soul a sacred *character* which can never be effaced, marking us henceforth as the *soldiers* of Jesus Christ.

The following histories will show you, my dear children, how the grace of Confirmation works in the soul of the worthy receiver, to enable him to act with wisdom, courage and prudence in circumstances of the greatest trial.

ST. MARTIN AND THE ROBBER.

St. Martin of Tours, while yet a youth, was travelling over the Alps, when he fell into the hands of robbers, one of whom drew his sword and held it suspended over his head, as if about to inflict a mortal blow. He would, indeed, have done so, had not his companion stayed his hand. The holy youth showed no symptom of fear, but recommended himself entirely to the protection and disposal of Divine Providence. The robbers, struck with astonishment at his calmness and self-possession in so imminent a danger, asked him who he was, and whether he was not filled with fear at the sight of the sword uplifted to slay him. He replied that he was a Christian, and that he had no fear, because he knew that the Divine Goodness is always most ready to protect us both in life and death, and that it is never nearer to us than when we are exposed to the greatest dangers. He added that his only subject of grief was, that they, by the lives they led, deprived themselves of the mercy of God. The robbers listened to him with astonishment, and admired the courage and confidence in God which virtue inspires. His fervent words made a deep impression upon their hearts, and he who had attempted to kill him, became a Christian, and, entering into a monastery, led henceforth a life of devotion and penance.

It is related, in the life of the same Saint, that when he was about to leave the army in order to devote himself more freely to the service of God, some of his companions taunted him with cowardice, and asserted that he had taken this resolution through fear of the battle that was impending.

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Upon which he courageously answered, "Place me in the front of the battle without arms, and in the name of the Lord Jesus, protected not by a helmet and buckler, but by the sign of the Cross, I will, without fear, thrust myself into the thickest squadron of the enemy." The Holy Ghost inspired him thus to speak, to show to the world that the power of mere human courage falls far short of the power of God's grace in a soul filled with the *Fear of the Lord*, and enriched with the gift of Christian *Fortitude.—Butler's Saints' Lives.*

HEROIC FORTITUDE OF A RECENT MARTYR.

Among the numerous confessors of the Faith who, during this present century have courageously undergone torments and death in the kingdom of Tong-quin, the name of Michael Mi is deserving of special mention. He was arrested, along with his aged father-in-law, Anthony, on the charge of being concerned in the concealment of a priest, who was taken, and who suffered with them. The poor old Anthony, who was on the verge of seventy, shuddered at the sight of the instruments of torture which were displayed before the tribunal, but Michael encouraged him by reminding him of the eternal reward which they were about to purchase so cheaply, at the price of a few short and passing sufferings. "And as to the stripes which you dread, fear not, father," said he; "I will offer myself to endure them in your place." Accordingly, after he himself had been flogged without mercy, so that his whole body was a mass of wounds and blood, he, of his own accord, lay down again upon the ground, saying to the Judge, "My father is aged and infirm; take pity on him, and suffer me to be flogged in his stead." And when this was permitted, he with the greatest joy endured a second scourging, nor did a groan or sigh escape him while his wounds were being reopened, and his flesh again torn and rent asunder.

After many examinations and cruel torments, the three confessors of the Faith were at length condemned to be beheaded, and set out with serene and joyful countenances for the place of execution. Michael Mi distinguished himself especially by his undaunted courage. "Give me some money," said the executioner to him, "and I will promise to cut off your head at a single blow, so that you may have less to suffer." "Cut it into a hundred pieces if you like," said the Christian hero; "it matters not, provided that you manage somehow to cut it off. As for money, I have plenty at home,

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but I would rather that it should be given to the poor." So saying, he bent his head to receive the fatal stroke, and went to receive the triple crown of faith, charity and filial piety.—*Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.*

III. We have already seen that Confirmation contains the outward sign and the interior grace which are required to make a Sacrament. But there is a third condition equally necessary, namely, *that it should have been ordained by Jesus Christ.* When was it, then, that our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Confirmation? My dear children, the Holy Scripture does not tell us the exact time when the outward sign of Confirmation was determined by our Blessed Redeemer, but it does tell us in many places that he promised to send the Holy Ghost upon his disciples to enlighten and strengthen them, and to remain with them till the end of time. Very probably it was during the forty days which elapsed between his Resurrection from the dead and his Ascension into heaven, that our Lord instructed his Apostles respecting the precise nature of this Sacrament and the manner of administering it. Accordingly, we find that, as soon as they began their public preaching, after they had baptised those whom they converted, they also *imposed hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.** It is plain, therefore, that they must have learnt from our Blessed Lord in what manner they were to communicate to their disciples that same Holy Spirit, whom they themselves had received in a visible manner upon Whitsunday. It is true that we do not find express mention in Scripture of the use of the Holy Chrism, or of the form of words given in the catechism; but all that our Blessed Lord and his Apostles did, is not recorded in Sacred Writ. More-

* Acts viii. 15—17, xix. 5, 6; II. Cor. i. 21, 22, &c.

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over, it is sufficient for us to know that the Church, which is the infallible guide of truth, has received from the Apostles themselves, and handed down to us, that it is necessary for the Bishop, in administering this Sacrament, to impose his hands over us, to anoint our foreheads with the Holy Chrism, and to repeat the form of words now used in Confirmation.

Q. Who is the ordinary minister of Confirmation ?

A. A bishop only.

The Bishop only, my dear children, is the ordinary minister of Confirmation ; that is to say, it is *he* who is especially appointed by our Lord to administer this Sacrament. Hence we find, in the Acts of the Apostles, that when the Deacon, St. Philip, had converted many of the Samaritans, he only baptised them, and that the Apostles who were in Jerusalem, when they heard of it, sent two of their number, St. Peter and St. John, to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation, " who, when they were come," says the sacred writer, " prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For he was not yet come upon any of them, but they were only baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." * So is it in our own days. The priest Baptises, says Mass, hears Confessions, &c., but he cannot *Confirm*. This is reserved for the Bishop, who from time to time visits the various parishes of his diocese, in order to administer this Sacrament. It is, indeed, in the power of the Pope, as the successor of St. Peter and the Vicar of Christ, to allow a simple priest, in cases of great necessity, to give Confirmation with the Holy Chrism, which has been consecrated by the Bishop. This, however, is very rarely done, and

* Acts viii. 15—17.

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chiefly occurs in countries where the Church is suffering grievous persecution, and no Bishop is at hand to confer a Sacrament which is so necessary for the support and encouragement of the faithful.

We now come to speak of the ceremonies of Confirmation, the chief of which are described in the two following questions and answers :—

Q. How does the Bishop administer this sacrament ?

A. He prays that the Holy Ghost may come down upon us ; he imposes his hands on us, making the sign of the Cross with chrism on our forehead, at the same time pronouncing a set form of words.

Q. What are those words ?

A. "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

In the early ages of the Church, my dear children, and indeed until the ninth century, it was the custom to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation immediately after Baptism, even in the case of infants. It is now generally given to those only who have attained the use of reason, and who are sufficiently instructed to understand the nature and effects of this Sacrament. For this purpose, public instructions are usually given in the church for some time previous to the day appointed by the Bishop for the solemn administration of this sacred rite. At these instructions all who have made their first Communion and have not yet been confirmed, should be careful to attend ; for opportunities of receiving this sacrament do not often occur, and we should be much to blame if, through our own wilful neglect, we were to deprive ourselves, at an age when we most need them, of the special graces and helps to perseverance which our Lord is ready to bestow upon us by means of this Sacrament. To receive Confirmation worthily,

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it is not, however, sufficient to be well instructed, we must also be free from all grievous sin ; and to insure the *full grace* of the Sacrament, we should, moreover, purify ourselves as much as possible from lesser stains, and be striving earnestly to overcome our passions. To these endeavours we should join earnest prayers to the Divine Spirit that he would help us, by his all-powerful grace, to receive him worthily, and that, coming into our hearts, he would fill them with his heavenly light, and inflame them with the fire of his holy love. For this purpose, we might recite the Hymns of the Holy Ghost daily for some little time before our Confirmation. On the eve of the day appointed for the administration of the Sacrament, we should cleanse our souls by a good Confession, and obtain from our Confessor a ticket on which is written our own name, and the name of the Saint whom we choose in Confirmation as our patron and protector throughout life. This ticket is to be presented to the Bishop or his assistant at the moment of Confirmation. It is also necessary, as in Baptism, to be provided with a Godfather or Godmother, according to the sex of the confirmed ; for, though we are old enough to answer for ourselves, yet it is fitting that we should have both a *witness* of the solemn engagement which we make in Confirmation to act throughout life as faithful and valiant soldiers of Jesus Christ, and a true *friend* who will, as occasion requires, assist and encourage us in our spiritual combat. I may remark that the sponsors in Confirmation contract the same spiritual relationship to the newly-confirmed and his parents, which we have already spoken of in regard to the sponsors in Baptism.

The day appointed having now arrived, the candidates for Confirmation present themselves before the Bishop, kneeling in front of the altar while *he prays*

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that the Holy Ghost may come down upon them. With hands extended to bless them, his Lordship recites the beautiful prayers of the Confirmation service, begging that the Holy Spirit will descend with his seven precious gifts into the soul of each. Then, after repeating upon his knees the hymn of the Holy Ghost, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, he proceeds to the immediate administration of the Sacrament: *He imposes his hands over them, making the sign of the Cross with Chrism on their foreheads, at the same time pronouncing a set form of words.* And what are those words? *I sign thee with the sign of the Cross, and I confirm thee with the Chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* After thus anointing each of the candidates, the Bishop gives him a slight blow on the cheek, to show that he must be ready henceforth to suffer patiently contradictions and ill-treatment in the service of his Divine Master. The sacred Chrism having been wiped from the foreheads of the newly-confirmed, the service concludes with prayer for their perseverance, followed by the blessing of the Bishop. Those who have been confirmed should then return to their places, and remain for some time in prayer to entertain the Holy Spirit who has come to visit them, in the same manner as they would converse with our Blessed Lord after Communion.

Such, my dear children, are the principal ceremonies of Confirmation, all of which are full of meaning and well calculated to inspire our hearts both with reverence for so great a Sacrament, and with love and gratitude to that Divine Spirit who, in spite of our unworthiness, vouchsafes to descend into our souls and enrich them with his precious graces. We may also learn therefrom many lessons for our instruction. The Bishop anoints our *foreheads* rather than any other member of our bodies, and he

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anoints them in the form of a cross. And why? To show that henceforth we must boldly profess our faith before men, and never be ashamed of the Cross of Christ. He anoints them with *Chrism*, which is composed of oil of olives, and the extract of that sweet aromatic herb, which is called the Balm of Gilead. By the *oil* is signified the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit; and by the *balm* the perfumes of Christian virtue which the Holy Ghost will breathe through our hearts, and which he will enable us, if we correspond with his grace, to send up as a sweet and acceptable odour to the throne of God. The Bishop also *strikes us gently on the cheek* to teach us to suffer with patience, and, as our Lord tells us, when we are smitten on one cheek, to turn to him who smites us the other also. Finally, he tells us that he confirms us *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,* to remind us that it is to the Three Persons of the Adorable Trinity that we owe all the graces which we receive in this Sacrament.

Let us, then, my dear children, cherish in our hearts a great esteem for this holy Sacrament, which contains so many graces, and is so powerful a means to enable us to gain a perfect victory over our passions. One great reason why so many fall away through lukewarmness, human respect, or the violence of temptation, is their neglect of Confirmation, or the unworthy dispositions with which they receive it. If you have not yet been confirmed, do all in your power to prepare to receive this Sacrament with great fervour as soon as opportunity offers, and this the more so, because you can receive it but once in your lives. If, however, you have been already confirmed, renew the grace which you then received by fervent prayers to the Holy Spirit, especially at Whitsuntide, and on the anniversary of your Confirmation. In

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this way you may supply in some measure the defects of your dispositions at the time of your Confirmation; for example, your want of fervour, or of a due preparation or proper thanksgiving. Indeed, theologians teach us that even if, unhappily, we have received this Sacrament unworthily, we must not despair, for that the grace of it revives in the soul when we sincerely repent. Finally, often thank our Blessed Lord for his Goodness and Love in instituting this Sacrament, and be always faithful to the lights and graces which you receive from the Divine Spirit.

JULIAN THE APOSTATE AND HIS PAGE.

It is related by the historian Prudentius, that the Roman Emperor Julian, who had been brought up a Christian, but upon coming to the empire, abandoned his religion, determined to make public profession of his impiety, by a solemn sacrifice to the pagan idols. He accordingly repaired to the temple, attended by all his court, among whom was a Christian page, who had a short time previously been admitted to the Sacrament of Confirmation. Everything being ready for the sacrifice, the Emperor ordered the priests to commence the sacred rites. They endeavoured to do so, and raised their knives to strike the victims prepared for the sacrifice; but what was their astonishment when they found themselves unable to proceed! Their knives became suddenly blunted and incapable of inflicting a wound; while, to add to their consternation, the fire on the altar was suddenly extinguished. Thereupon the presiding priest exclaimed, "Some unknown power prevents our sacrifice. There must be some Christian present, who has been baptised or confirmed."

The Emperor Julian on hearing these words immediately ordered search to be made, when behold! one of his own pages stood forth and thus addressed him, "Know, O Emperor, that I am a Christian, and have been baptised. A few days ago I was anointed with the holy oil to strengthen me for the combat. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ who has redeemed me by his cross. I acknowledge *him* only for my God, and glory in belonging to him. It was I, or rather the God whom I serve, who prevented the impiety you were on the point of committing. I invoked the sacred name of Jesus, and the demons had no longer any power. In the

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name of Jesus Christ, who is the true God, they have been put to flight." At these words, the Emperor who, though an apostate through malice and self-interest, knew well the power of the name of Jesus, was struck with terror, and fearing the Divine vengeance, retired from the temple in confusion. The Christians, on the other hand, were filled with courage at seeing the admirable effects produced in the soul by the strengthening grace of Confirmation.—*Catholic Anecdotes.*

FIFTH INSTRUCTION.

The Holy Eucharist. Its Nature and Institution. Transubstantiation. Effects of this Sacrament.

We come now to speak of the Holy Eucharist, which is the most holy, the most sublime, and the most excellent of all the Sacraments. In each of the other Sacraments our Blessed Lord has bestowed upon us some special grace to supply some particular want of our souls, but in the Holy Eucharist he gives us the very fountain and source of all grace, namely, his own Divine self, from whom all graces spring. Attend, therefore, carefully to the instructions I am going to give you upon this Sacrament. The more you know of the Blessed Eucharist, the more will you love and reverence the mystery which it contains, and the better will you be prepared to approach this Heavenly Food, on the devout reception of which your spiritual welfare and happiness so much depend.

Q. What is the Holy Eucharist?

A. It is the true body and blood of Christ, under the appearances of bread and wine.

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Yes, my dear children, the Holy Eucharist is *the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ*, the Son of God, made man, *under the appearances*, or visible form, *of bread and wine*. It is called the *Eucharist*, which means *thanksgiving*, because it is recorded that when our Blessed Lord instituted it, he first gave thanks to his Heavenly Father, and also because it is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for all his blessings. It is also called the *Blessed Sacrament* as being the most excellent of all the Sacraments, containing our Lord himself, who is worthy to be blessed and praised for ever. But the name by which you perhaps best know it, is the *Holy Communion*, that is, the Sacrament in which our Blessed Lord *communicates* himself to us, and unites us to himself by the closest of all ties, becoming one with us and we with him. Let us now see in what manner the Holy Eucharist fulfils the three conditions which are necessary to make it a Sacrament.

I. First of all, then, the Holy Eucharist contains *an outward or visible sign* of inward grace. But what is that sign? It is the *bread and wine* which are laid upon the altar at the beginning of Mass, and the *words of consecration* which are pronounced over them by the priest immediately before the Elevation. The bread and wine are called the *matter* of the Sacrament, the words of consecration its *form*, and they both together make up the outward sign. As soon as the words of consecration are pronounced, the *substance* of the bread and wine is no longer present, for it has been changed by the Power of God into the Body and Blood of his Divine Son. But the *appearances* of the bread and wine still remain as a sensible sign of the precious treasure of our Lord's Body and Blood, which are there contained though hidden from our bodily eyes.

When our Blessed Lord instituted the Holy

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Eucharist at his last supper, he made use of *ordinary bread,* composed of wheaten flour, and of *wine made from the pure juice of the grape.* The same must, therefore, be used by the priest in consecrating the Blessed Sacrament; oaten or barley bread would not suffice, nor would it do to make use of wine extracted from any other fruit but that of the vine. Moreover, as our Lord was then celebrating the Paschal Supper, he used *unleavened* bread, according to the custom of the Jews, that is, bread made of pure flour, without the addition of any of those things called leaven, which are usually mixed with dough to make it rise, and thus prevent the bread from being sad and heavy. For this reason the Church has ordained that amongst us unleavened bread alone should be used in consecrating the Holy Eucharist, though she has permitted the use of leavened bread to the Greek and other Eastern Churches. Notice, also, that the priest adds to the wine which he uses at Mass a few drops of water, in memory of the Blood and Water which flowed from our Lord's wounded side, and which are looked upon as a figure of the union of Christ with the members of his Church. This custom of mixing a little water with the wine placed in the chalice comes down from the time of the Apostles, and was probably taught them by our Blessed Lord himself.

With regard to the *words of consecration,* which are part of the outward sign of this Sacrament, they are the same that were used by our Lord himself at his last supper: "This is my Body; This is the Chalice of my Blood of the New and Eternal Testament, the Mystery of Faith; which shall be shed for you and for many to the remission of sins."* These

* NOTE.—The words *Eternal* and *Mystery of Faith* are not found in the history of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, as related in the Gospel, but are known by the tradition of the Church to have been delivered by our Blessed Lord to his Apostles.

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most holy words are pronounced by the priest in the Person of Jesus Christ, in whose Name and by whose Divine Power he consecrates the Holy Eucharist. They are spoken just before that solemn moment of the Mass when all the assistants bow their heads to adore our Divine Lord, who is truly and really present upon the altar as soon as the words of consecration are pronounced.

The bread and wine and the words of consecration are, as we have seen, the outward sign of the Holy Eucharist, but what is *the inward grace* that is hid under these veils, and is thereby conveyed to our souls? It is, my dear children, nothing less than *the true Body and Blood of Christ,* given to us for the food and nourishment of our souls. And this is not all; along with his Body and Blood we receive *his soul*, making up his whole Human Nature, and along with his Human Nature, we receive *his Divinity* or Godhead, which is never separated from his Sacred Humanity. In other words, we receive our Blessed Lord whole and entire, that is, both as God and Man. Moreover, it matters not whether we receive Holy Communion under the form of bread or under the form of wine, Jesus Christ being equally present under either form. In like manner, if the sacred species are divided, for example, if the Consecrated Host be broken into many pieces, or the Precious Blood poured out of the chalice, our Lord is present whole and entire in the smallest drop or particle, for though the *species* or *appearances* of bread and wine may be divided, *Jesus Christ* can never be divided, and therefore his Body, his Blood, his Soul, and Divinity are equally present in each particle that is broken from the Sacred Host, and in each drop that is poured from the Consecrated Chalice.

You will understand this important truth more clearly, if you will bear in mind that, though Jesus

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Christ once died upon the cross for the sins of men, he rose again to life on the third day, and that it is his living and glorified Body which we receive in the Holy Eucharist. Now, a body cannot be living unless blood be flowing in its veins, and the soul be dwelling within it. There was a time when the Blood of Jesus was separated, not indeed from his Divinity, but from his Sacred Body, namely, when he shed it on the cross; but it was all gathered up into his Body on the day of his Resurrection, and it can never be spilt again. There was a time also when his Soul, still remaining united with his Divinity, was separated from his Body and his Blood, namely, when he expired on the cross, and his Soul went down to Limbo, but it was united once more to his Body on Easter Sunday morning when he rose from the tomb, nor will it ever again be separated from it, for "Christ," says St. Paul, "rising from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him."* Hence it follows that when the priest consecrates the Sacred Host, not only the Body of our Lord, but his Precious Blood and his Sacred Soul are equally present under the form of bread, and, in like manner, when he consecrates the chalice, that along with the Precious Blood of our Lord, his Body and his Soul are likewise present under the form of wine. Moreover, together with the Human Nature of our Blessed Lord, there is also present his Divine Nature, the Divinity being intimately united in one Person with every portion of his Sacred Humanity, without any possibility of division or separation. Therefore, my dear children, if you are asked what you receive when you go to Holy Communion, your answer must be, "I receive the true Body and Blood, the Soul and the Divinity of

* Rom. vi. 9.

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Jesus Christ." And this it is which constitutes the *inward grace* of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

III. In the third place the Holy Eucharist was *ordained or instituted by Jesus Christ*, as we learn not only from the infallible teaching of the Church, but from many passages of the Holy Scriptures. It seems, indeed, as if our Blessed Lord had wished to provide for us in the Sacred Writings a most exact account of the nature and institution of this Divine Sacrament, in answer to the false teachings and blasphemies which he foresaw would in later times be uttered regarding it.

Upon one occasion, after miraculously feeding an immense multitude with a few loaves and fishes in the desert, our Lord took occasion to speak to the people in the clearest terms of the Heavenly Food which he was about to give them for the support and nourishment of their souls. After reproving them for their too great eagerness after earthly food, and their little care for what was spiritual and heavenly, he reminded them of the Manna which God had sent to their fathers in the desert, and promised to give them a still more precious food which should preserve their souls to everlasting life. *Our fathers*, said he, *did eat manna in the desert and are dead. I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven, that if any man eat of it he may not die. If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is my Flesh for the life of the world.* Upon this the Jews murmured, and said to one another, *How can this man give us his flesh to eat?* Then Jesus said to them, *Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my Flesh is meat indeed, and my Blood is drink indeed.**

* John vi. 31—56.

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These magnificent promises of our Blessed Lord were fulfilled on that last sorrowful night, when he eat the Paschal supper with his Apostles before his Passion. Upon that occasion it is recorded by the Evangelists that, whilst they were at supper, our Lord "took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave to his disciples and said, *Take ye and eat: This is my body.* And taking the chalice he gave thanks and gave to them saying, *Drink ye all of this. For this is my Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.*"* By these solemn words our Blessed Lord instituted the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, changing by his Almighty Power the bread and wine into his Body and Blood, and giving Communion to his Apostles with his own hands. At the same time he gave to them and their successors, the Bishops and Priests of his Church, power to do the same that he had done, in memory of his cruel Passion, until the end of time: "Do this," said he, "for a commemoration of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until he come."†

Such, my dear children, is the history of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, as related in the Gospel. Let us never cease to bless and thank our Lord for that Infinite Goodness and Love which moved him, at the very moment when the malice of men was preparing for him barbarous torments and a cruel death, to bequeath to us so great a legacy of love, namely, his own Divine self, to strengthen, console and nourish us, and bring us to eternal life.

Many beautiful figures of the Blessed Eucharist are recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Among others was the miraculous bread, called Manna, sent from

* Matt. xxvi. 26—28. See also Mark xiv. 22—24; Luke xxii. 19, 20; I. Cor. xi. 23—29. † Luke xxii. 19; I. Cor. xi. 26.

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heaven to nourish the Israelites in the desert, the history of which is thus related in the book of Exodus.

THE ISRAELITES FED WITH MANNA.

After the people of Israel had gone out of Egypt; and entered upon the vast desert which lay between the Red Sea and the Land of Promise, they murmured against their leaders, Moses and Aaron, saying, "*Why have you brought us into this desert that you might destroy all the multitude with famine?*

"And the Lord said to Moses, *Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you. Let the people go forth and gather what is sufficient for every day. But the sixth day let it be double to that they were wont to gather for every day.*

"So it came to pass in the morning a dew lay round about the camp. And when it had covered the face of the earth, it appeared like unto a hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, *Manhu!* which signifieth, *What is this!* And Moses said to them, *This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. Let every one gather of it as much as is enough to eat; a gomor for every man, according to the number of souls that dwell in a tent, so shall you take of it.* And the children of Israel did so, and they gathered, one more, another less. And they measured by the measure of a gomor, neither had he more that had gathered more, nor did he find less that had provided less, but every one had gathered according to what they were able to eat.

"And Moses said to them, *Let no man leave thereof till the morning.* And they hearkened not to him, but some of them left until the morning, and it began to be full of worms, and it putrefied, and Moses was angry with them. Now every one gathered in the morning as much as might suffice to eat, and after the sun grew hot it melted.

"But on the sixth day they gathered twice as much; and it did not putrefy, neither was there worm found in it. And Moses said, *Gather it six days, but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, therefore it shall not be found. The Lord hath given you the Sabbath, and for this reason on the sixth day he giveth you a double provision.*

"And the children of Israel eat Manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land."—*Exodus* xvi.

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My dear children, in this miraculous Manna sent from heaven, we have, as our Lord tells us, a striking figure of that true Bread of Life coming down from heaven, which he has given us in the Holy Eucharist, namely, his own Sacred Flesh for the life of the world. The *Manna* nourished and supported the Israelites in the desert on their way to the Promised Land; so does the *Holy Communion* feed and sustain our souls in our passage through the desert of this life to the true Land of Promise, the kingdom of heaven. The *Manna* was the daily bread of the Israelites, and had in it, as the Psalmist tells us, the sweetness of every taste, that is, the flavour of every kind of delicious food. So, also, does God wish the *Blessed Eucharist* to be our constant food by a frequent and worthy Communion, giving to us therein every precious grace that can strengthen or delight the heart of man. It is only when we arrive at the "habitable land," our true home in the heavenly Jerusalem, that this Divine food will no longer be communicated to us under the humble form of bread; for it will then be permitted us to behold our Lord in all his glory, and to possess and enjoy him by the sweetest and most intimate union for all eternity.

Q. How are the bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Christ?

A. By the power of God, to whom nothing is impossible or difficult.

Q. When is this change made?

A. When the words of consecration ordained by Jesus Christ are pronounced by the priest in the Mass.

It is *by the Power of God, to whom nothing is impossible or difficult*, that the bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. For God's Power, as you know, has no bounds or limits. The heavens and

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the earth, the sun, moon and stars, the mighty ocean, the hills and forests, the whole animal creation, were called into existence out of nothing by his single word,* and it is by His Omnipotence alone, sustaining and supporting them, that they preserve their being. By the same Almighty Power of God are the bread and wine in the Blessed Eucharist changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. This wonderful change takes place at that solemn moment *when the words of consecration, ordained by Jesus Christ, are pronounced by the priest in the Mass.* No sooner are these awful words uttered by the minister of God, than that, which was a moment before mere wheaten bread and the juice of the grape, is now no longer bread and wine, but the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. God has spoken it, and who shall deny it? He has said by the mouth of his minister, "This is my Body," and who shall dare to doubt the words of Christ? He has said too, "This is my Blood," and who shall venture to affirm that it is not his Blood?† The *appearances* of bread and wine indeed remain, to prove our faith and to dispel our fears, but the *substance* of bread and wine is no longer there, having been changed by the Almighty words of Jesus Christ into his Sacred Body and his Precious Blood. It is for this reason that, as soon as the solemn words of consecration are pronounced, the Sacred Host, and, afterwards, the Consecrated Chalice are raised aloft in the air, and the bell is rung at each elevation, that all the people may bow their heads in silent adoration; for though we cannot behold our Lord with our bodily eyes, yet we know by the light of faith, that he is there as truly present on the altar as he was in the stable at Bethlehem or on the hill of Calvary. This wonderful

* Ps. cxlviii. 5. † St. Cyr, Jerus. Catech. Myst.

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miracle, by which the substance of the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of our Divine Lord, is usually called Transubstantiation, which means the change of one substance into another.

We read in the life of our Blessed Lord that on one occasion, at the commencement of his public preaching, he worked a miracle very similar in its nature to that which he wrought at his last supper. I mean the changing of water into wine at

THE MARRIAGE FEAST OF CANA.

"There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the Mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the Mother of Jesus said to him, *They have no wine.* And Jesus saith to her, *Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come.* His mother saith to the waiters, *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye.*

"Now there were set six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures a piece. Jesus saith to them, *Fill the waterpots with water!* And they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them, *Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast.* And they carried it.

"And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water, the chief steward calleth the bridegroom and saith to him, *Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drank, then that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now.*

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee." *John* ii. 1—11.

ST. LOUIS AND THE MIRACULOUS HOST.

It is related in the life of St. Louis, king of France, that upon one occasion while the priest was celebrating Mass in the royal chapel, our Blessed Lord manifested himself to the assistants during the time of the elevation, under the form of a little infant of surpassing beauty. As the king was not present, a messenger was immediately despatched to inform him of the miraculous event. In the meantime the priest was earnestly requested not to lower his arms until St. Louis

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had arrived, in order that the king might witness with his own eyes so extraordinary a prodigy. The messenger having reached the royal apartment, informed the king of the event, and urged him to lose no time in repairing to the spot. Whereupon St. Louis, without manifesting any surprise, quietly replied, "Let those go to witness the prodigy, who have no true faith in the Blessed Eucharist. For my part, I am more satisfied about the real presence of Jesus in the consecrated Host, than if I were to behold him with my own eyes." So well did he know that true faith has a firmer foundation in the Word of God and the teaching of the Church, than any that can be obtained by the testimony of the senses.—*Anima Divota.*

Q. Why has Christ given Himself to us in this sacrament?

A. To feed and nourish our souls, that we may live by Him.

The Holy Eucharist, containing as it does our Blessed Lord himself, who is the abundant source of all grace, cannot fail to produce the most wonderful effects in the souls of those who worthily receive it! The answer of the Catechism which you have just repeated, explains to us two of the principal fruits of this Sacrament; but there are several others which are not here mentioned.

1. In the first place, Jesus Christ has given himself to us in this Sacrament *to feed and nourish our souls.* For, as our bodies require corporal food to strengthen and support them, and as without it they would soon grow feeble and perish, so do our souls stand in need of spiritual and heavenly nourishment, that they may not grow faint and languish, and die the death of sin. Now our Blessed Lord has provided for us this spiritual food in the Holy Eucharist, in which he nourishes us with his Divine self, thereby increasing in our hearts that sanctifying grace which is the life of our souls, and preserving them in continual strength and vigour. We have a beautiful figure of the effects of this life-giving Sacrament in

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that *Tree of Life*, planted by the hand of God in the Garden of Paradise, by eating of the fruit of which our first parents would have been preserved in continual health and strength, and secured not only from infirmity and disease, but even from death itself.*

2. The second effect of the Holy Eucharist is, that it unites us closely to Jesus Christ, and enables us to *live by him*. These are the words of our Lord, "He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood abideth in me and I in him;"† and again, "He that eateth me the same also shall live by me."‡ One of the holy fathers of the Church, St. Cyril, of Alexandria, compares the union of Jesus Christ with the devout communicant to the union of two pieces of wax, which, when melted together, can no longer be distinguished and make but one.§ So is it with our souls when united with our Lord by Holy Communion. Even after his bodily presence has passed away from us, *he* continues to abide with us spiritually in a special manner, and *we* with him; nothing can separate us from him but mortal sin. Thus he directs us by his Wisdom, strengthens us by his Grace, protects us by his Power; while we on our part, united with him by the closest bond of love, and mindful of his special presence within us; continue to abide in him, working for him and by him, that is for his honour and glory, guided and assisted by the inspirations of his Holy Spirit. Oh, blessed union, the foretaste of Paradise, the commencement of heaven upon earth!

3. The third effect of the Holy Eucharist is to *cleanse us* from those lesser sins, which are the result of human weakness and frailty, rather than of a deliberate will. For, as corporal food restores to the body that substance which it is continually losing by

* Gen. ii. 9; iii. 22. † John vi. 57. ‡ John vi. 58. § Anima Divota.

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the wear and tear of human life, so does the Heavenly Food repair those losses which the soul sustains from the excessive ardour and the imperfections of our nature.

4. The fourth effect of this Sacrament is to *extinguish the fire of concupiscence, to weaken the violence of our passions, and to fortify us against temptation.* For it enkindles within us the flame of Divine Charity, which consumes the soul with the love and desire of what is pleasing to God and according to his Will, rather than of what will gratify and indulge our corrupt nature.

5. Finally, the Blessed Eucharist is *a pledge*, which our Lord gives us, *of a glorious resurrection and of life everlasting.* "He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day."* For as in the Holy Communion we become intimately united with the glorified Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which has risen from the dead and can never die again, so does our Lord assure us, that, if we preserve this happy union with him, we shall not die eternally, but that he will raise us up at the last day, to live for ever with him amid the joys of Paradise.

Such, my dear children, are the principal effects which the Holy Eucharist produces in the souls of those who worthily receive it. To each is given according to his dispositions, that is, according to the purity of his soul, the liveliness of his faith, the depth of his humility, the ardour of his desire, and the fervour of his love. So do those who go to draw water at a fountain receive a greater or less supply in proportion to the size and capacity of the vessel which they have taken thither. There are, however, certain dispositions which are absolutely necessary to

* John vi. 55.

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enable us to approach worthily to this Divine Banquet—dispositions without which this heavenly food would bring death rather than life to the soul. These we shall come to speak of in the next instruction.

THE "ENCHANTED BREAD" OF THE CHRISTIANS.

During the cruel persecution which raged against the Christian religion in the kingdom of Tong-Quin, under the tyrant Minh Menh, the grandfather of the present monarch, the power and efficacy of the Holy Eucharist in sustaining the courage of the martyrs was manifest even to the infidels. While these glorious champions of Jesus Christ were cruelly racked and scourged, or their flesh was torn off their bones with red hot pincers, the Holy Name of Jesus was ever on their lips, and they continued to profess their faith with undaunted courage. The Mandarins, amazed at a fortitude so far beyond the power of human nature, attributed it with truth to the Heavenly Food which the Christians partook of in their assemblies. "Truly," they would say, "this man has been eating of that enchanted bread which casts a spell upon the soul."

Among the other Christians who were about this time dragged before the tribunal and tortured for the faith, was a youthful hero named Xavier, a pupil of that illustrious martyr, Father Cornay. So extraordinary was his courage and intrepidity, that the Mandarin, who examined and subjected him to the torture, exclaimed, "Here is a youth, a mere boy, and yet he has the courage of a lion. What should I do, if I had to deal with a priest?" When he was led to execution the crowd repeated as he passed along, "See how he despises death. The Master of Heaven must certainly have descended and taken up his abode with him."—*Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.*

And they spoke the truth, my dear children, for the Lord of Heaven and earth had come to him in the Holy Eucharist, to arm and strengthen him for the combat.

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SIXTH INSTRUCTION.

The Holy Eucharist continued. Dispositions necessary. Preparation and Thanksgiving. Evil of a bad Communion. Importance of a good first Communion.

Q. What is required of us before we receive the blessed Sacrament ?

A. We must be in a state of grace ; we must also be fasting from midnight.

Yes, these are the two dispositions which are absolutely required for the worthy reception of the Holy Eucharist—*we must be in a state of grace, and we must also be fasting from midnight.* The first of these dispositions regards the soul, the second regards the body. The absence of either would make our Communion no longer a blessing, but a horrible sacrilege.

In the first place, *we must be in a state of grace*, that is, our souls must be free from the guilt of mortal sin. To receive our Lord in a state of mortal sin is the most grievous outrage we can offer him, for mortal sin is infinitely opposed to his Divine Purity and Sanctity. If then we are conscious of having our souls stained with the guilt of grievous sin, we must purify them by a sincere repentance and a good confession. Before approaching to this most Holy Sacrament, " Let a man prove himself," says St. Paul, " and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord."*

In the second place, *we must also be fasting from*

* I. Cor. ii. 28, 29.

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midnight, that is to say, we must not have taken either food or drink after twelve o'clock of the preceding night. You see that the fast enjoined before Holy Communion is much stricter than the ordinary fast of the Church, such as we keep in Lent or Advent. The latter fast is not broken by drinking, only by eating between meals. Moreover, if what we eat on ordinary fasting days is a mere trifle, such as a crumb of bread, it is not considered sufficient to break our fast. It is different with the fast before Communion. To eat a crumb of bread, or to drink a drop of water, would be sufficient to prevent us from receiving the Blessed Sacrament. If, therefore, you ever take a drink, or eat anything when you are going to Communion, whether it be on purpose or by mistake, you must put off your Communion to another day.

You will ask me, perhaps, whether it would break your fast if you took food or drink into your mouth, and then, when you thought of your Communion, spat it out without swallowing it. No, my dear children, it would not, because that could not be called eating or drinking. In like manner it would not break your fast if you rinsed out your mouth with water before going to Communion, and then spat it out. Again if, on your way to church, a fly or a drop of rain were to get into your mouth by accident, and you were to swallow it down along with your spittle, it would not break your fast, because it could not be said to have been taken in the way of food or drink.

You see from this, how strict the law of the Church is regarding the fast before Communion. It is ordered out of reverence to the Most Holy Sacrament, that this Divine Food may be the first which passes our lips on our Communion day, and that, by mortifying our carnal appetites, we may be better

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able to relish its hidden sweetness. It is true that the Apostles were not fasting when they first received Communion, for our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist at his last supper, after they had partaken of the Paschal Lamb. So we find also, that the first Christians were accustomed to meet together for supper before they received the Holy Eucharist. But even in the time of the Apostles, this custom was found to be liable to much abuse, as we learn from St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians: "When you come together into one place," says he, "it is not now to eat the Lord's Supper. For every one taketh before his own supper to eat. And one indeed is hungry and another is drunk. What! have you not houses to eat and drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? Do I praise you? In this I praise you not."* It was to remedy these evils and to prevent the irreverence thereby offered to the Adorable Sacrament, that the Apostles, to whom all that regards the order of Divine Worship was committed by our Lord, enjoined that Mass should always be celebrated and the Holy Communion received fasting. To this rule there is, however, one exception, namely, the Communion of those who are in danger of death. To them the Blessed Sacrament is given at any hour, notwithstanding that they may have broken their fast; for the Church, which is a tender mother, would not deprive them, in that moment of their greatest need, of the presence of our Lord, who gave himself to them to be their *Viaticum*, in other words, their companion on their journey to eternity.

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES AND THE SOLDIER.

St. Francis of Sales was on one occasion preparing a garrison of soldiers for their Easter Communion, when it hap-

* I. Cor. xi. 20--22.

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pened that one of them, through forgetfulness, eat a piece of bread at the mess table before going to receive the Blessed Sacrament. His comrades, who had observed him eating, were extremely shocked at seeing him afterwards go up to the altar to receive Holy Communion. When Mass was over, they loaded him with reproaches, and the officer in charge went so far as to tell him that he had committed a horrible sacrilege.

Hearing these words, the poor man, terrified at the thought of what he had done, was reduced to the brink of despair. He sighed, wept, and bitterly bewailed his sin; but he met with very little compassion from his comrades. At length one of them, moved at the sight of his grief, advised him to apply for advice to the *good father*, which was the name they had given to St. Francis. The soldier did as he was recommended, but no sooner had he come into the presence of the Saint, than he was so overcome with grief at the remembrance of his fault, that he was unable to utter a word.

St. Francis, moved with compassion at the sight of his affliction, begged of him in the kindest and most affectionate words, to make known to him the cause of his grief. "Alas! father," said the soldier, "I have committed a great crime." "And what is it?" said the Saint: "Come, take courage, my child; do you not know that there is a God full of mercy, ready to pardon the greatest sinner if he truly repents?" "Ah, but father," said the soldier, "I went to Holy Communion after breaking my fast. What must I do? If you do not help me, I am lost." "But did you do it on purpose?" "No, indeed, father," said the soldier, "I would die a thousand times rather than commit so great a crime on purpose." "Well, then," replied St. Francis, "I assure you that Almighty God has already pardoned you. Be comforted, and do not, on account of what could only be a venial sin of neglect, go and fall into a mortal sin of despair." "But, father," said the soldier, much comforted, "will you please to give me some penance for my sin." "Certainly," said the Saint; "go and say one Our Father and one Hail Mary, and I promise you that Almighty God will be satisfied." So saying, he sent back the good man to his barracks, full of joy and consolation.—*Life of St. Francis of Sales.*

We have now seen what dispositions are absolutely required to preserve us from making a bad Communion. A good deal more, however, is necessary to enable us to reap all the fruit which our Lord wishes us to derive from this Sacrament.

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It is related that when Jesus was about to institute the Holy Eucharist, he sent before him into the city of Jerusalem two of his disciples to prepare a room in which they might partake of this heavenly Banquet. This, my dear children, is a lesson for *us;* it teaches us what we ought to do when we are intending to approach the Holy Communion. The *room* is the temple of our souls, into which our Lord is about to enter that he may make his dwelling with us. For some days before Communion we should prepare that room, that is, we should cleanse and adorn our own interior by carefully abstaining from sin, fighting against our passions, and practising acts of virtue and self-denial. It is well also to perform certain devotions in order to inspire us with a greater love and desire of this Heavenly Food; for example, we might recite the hymn of the Blessed Sacrament, or one Our Father and Hail Mary in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On the day before, or the morning of our Communion, we should cleanse our souls by a good confession, trying to excite in our hearts a sincere sorrow even for our venial faults, which, if wilful and deliberate, are a great hindrance to the fruit of our Communion. Hence it was that our Blessed Lord, before communicating his Apostles, washed their feet with his own hands, to teach them the exceeding purity of soul with which they should approach to the Holy Eucharist. We should, moreover, on the night before and the morning of our Communion, frequently call to mind the Infinite Goodness of our Blessed Lord, manifested to us in this Sacrament, and excite ourselves to make him a return of love by acts of longing desire to receive him into our souls. These sentiments are beautifully expressed in the following words of your hymn, which you might sometimes repeat.

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"Jesus, Jesus, come to me;
Oh, how much I long for thee!
Comfort my poor soul distressed,
Take possession of my breast;
A thousand times I long for thee;
Jesus, Jesus, come to me."

The time for Mass having arrived, we should repair to church in a thoughtful and recollected manner, decently and modestly clad, for, a display of worldly finery is especially unbecoming at that Heavenly Feast at which Angels assist, and where all that is required from the guests is that they should wear the wedding garment of love and purity. We should be careful also to reach the church a short time before the Mass begins, that we may have time to recollect ourselves and prepare our minds to assist devoutly at the Holy Sacrifice. While Mass is going on, it is well to recite the prayers before Communion, which come in our prayer books, for they contain suitable reflections and acts of the principal virtues with which our souls should be adorned in honour of our Divine Guest. If you cannot read, say the Rosary of our Blessed Lady, asking her to help you to receive her Divine Son worthily, and trying to excite in your soul lively sentiments of faith, hope, love and contrition. When the time for Communion approaches, go up to the altar with your hands joined and eyes modestly cast down, and there kneel down and take the Communion cloth in your hands. Then redouble your fervour, making ardent acts of desire to be united to our Divine Lord, protesting indeed that you are most unworthy, but placing all your confidence in his Infinite Goodness and Love. When the clerk recites the Confiteor, say it with him, asking pardon for all your sins, and when the priest turns to the people with the Blessed Sacrament, reciting three times the "Domine non

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sum dignus," do you also say with deep humility and loving confidence, "Oh Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

At length the happy moment arrives, and the priest places on your tongue the Bread of Angels, saying to you, "May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve your soul to everlasting life." Receive our Lord with loving affection, and having swallowed the Sacred Host as soon as it is moistened, return to your place as you came, and there pour out your heart in the most tender sentiments of adoration, gratitude, love and thanksgiving. For the few minutes succeeding your Communion, until the Sacred Host is consumed, you have our Blessed Lord truly and really with you, both as God and Man, as truly indeed as he lay in the arms of Mary at Bethlehem, or hung upon the Cross on Calvary. They are, therefore, the most precious moments of your life, for what can our Lord refuse you when he has just given you himself? Speak to him out of the abundance of your hearts in your own simple words, as if you saw him present before you. And first of all, bow down to *adore* him, acknowledging him your Lord and your God, your Creator and your Redeemer. Then *thank* him for his Infinite Goodness in coming to visit you, and for all the blessings, both of soul and body, which you have received from him from the first moment of your existence, begging at the same time, the Blessed Virgin and the Saints and Angels to supply what is wanting on your part, and to thank our Lord as he deserves. Having made this fervent act of thanksgiving, *offer* yourselves and all that you have to your Divine Guest to be for ever his, and consecrate your hearts to his service. Finally, *beg* of him all graces both for yourselves and others. Pray for the Church, the Pope, the Bishops

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and Priests, your parents, friends and benefactors. Earnestly beseech our Lord to have mercy on poor sinners, and on all heretics and infidels, to convert them to the true faith, and bring them safe to heaven. Pray, also, for the poor souls in Purgatory, especially for your relations and friends, that the time of their sufferings may be shortened, and that they may speedily enter the joys of Paradise. Finally, pray for yourselves, that you may be preserved from sin, that you may subdue your passions, and that you may persevere to the end in the love and service of God. Then, having said all that you think of to our Blessed Lord, take up your prayer books and finish the prayers after Communion. Above all things remember, never to leave the Church on your Communion days immediately after the Mass is finished, but to remain for half an hour or twenty minutes to converse with our Blessed Lord, and finish your thanksgiving. Nothing is more painful than to see ignorant or thoughtless people hurry away after Communion, returning to their worldly thoughts and occupations, without paying the least regard or attention to our dear Lord who has come to visit them. No wonder that they reap little or no fruit from their Communion, for they repay the Divine Goodness with neglect and ingratitude. Truly have they reason to fear lest those temporal chastisements, which St. Paul tells us fell heavy on the Corinthians for making their Communions an occasion of feasting and sinful indulgence, should fall also on them for their heartless ingratitude and irreverence. "Therefore," says the Apostle, "there are many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep," that is, many of you are justly punished by various infirmities, and others by an untimely death. Do you then, my dear children, always remember throughout life to do all in your power to secure the fruit of your Communions

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by a good and fervent thanksgiving. Even after you have returned home, do not forget that you carry Christ with you, for he remains with you spiritually in a special manner, even after the Sacred Host is consumed, and when he is no longer present with you in his Human Nature. Be on your guard against the devil, who often assaults us more violently on our Communion days, in order to rob us of the Precious Treasure which we have received. Beg our Blessed Lord, therefore, with great fervour that he will keep you always united to him. Visit him often in the Holy Sacrament, and when you are not able to visit him in person, do so in spirit, turning your thoughts and affections to where he dwells in the Tabernacle for the love of you.

Oh, how happy will you be, if in approaching Holy Communion you follow faithfully these instructions! Each Communion will then be, as it were, a step towards heaven, for, every time that you receive our Blessed Lord, you will become more and more inflamed with his holy love, and more closely united to him.

There is an event recorded in the history of the prophet Elias, which affords a striking figure of the fruit which a devout Communion produces in the soul of man.

ELIAS FED BY AN ANGEL IN THE DESERT.

It is related in the Holy Scripture that when Elias was fleeing from the persecution of the impious Jezabel, he was overtaken with fatigue and hunger in the desert. "And when he was there and sat down under a juniper, he requested for his soul that he might die. And he cast himself down, and slept under the shadow of the juniper tree; and behold an Angel of the Lord touched him and said, *Arise and eat.* He looked, and behold! there was at his head, a hearth cake and a vessel of water; and he eat and drank, and fell asleep again. And the Angel of the Lord came again the second

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time, and touched him, and said to him, *Arise, eat, for thou hast yet a great way to go.* And he arose, and eat and drank, and walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto the mount of God, Horeb."—III. *Kings* xix.

My dear children, this miraculous bread brought by an Angel to Elias in the desert, is a lively figure of the Bread of Angels, the Holy Eucharist, which is given to us by our Lord, to nourish and support us in our pilgrimage through the desert of this world. Strengthened by this Divine Food, of which we should eat not once only, but again and again, we shall be able to walk on manfully in spite of every obstacle, until we arrive at Mount Horeb, which is interpreted the Vision of God, in other words, the sight and enjoyment of God in the heavenly Jerusalem.

THE DEVOUT COMMUNICANT.

We read in the life of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, that being permitted by his Confessor to receive the Holy Communion every Sunday, he divided the week between his thanksgiving and preparation, consecrating three days to each. The same is related of another devout soul who, in arranging his devotions, observed the following plan, which those who communicate weekly would do well to imitate. Sunday, the day of his Communion, was spent by him in sweet *union* and interior converse with our Blessed Lord. Monday was a day of *thanksgiving* for the rich treasure which he had received. On Tuesday he continually *offered* and consecrated himself to God. Wednesday was spent in constant *petitions* to his Divine Lord for all his own wants and for those of the whole Church. On Thursday he began his *preparation* for his next Communion, spending that day entirely in acts of *faith and adoration:* "Oh, my Jesus, I believe in thee, present in the most Holy Sacrament! Oh, my Jesus, I adore thee!" Friday was a day of *humiliation and contrition,* but of hope and confidence in the Divine mercy: "O Lord, I am not worthy! Oh, Jesus, make me worthy! In thee have I hoped, and I shall never be confounded!" Finally, Saturday was devoted to acts of *love and desire:* "Oh, my Jesus, I love thee. I long for thee! Oh, my Jesus, come and take possession of me! My beloved to me and I to him!"—*Catholic Anecdotes.*

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It is such souls as these, my dear children, souls who spare no trouble to make a good preparation and thanksgiving, that enjoy the *full fruit* of a good Communion. It is of Communions like these that it is justly said, "One Communion is sufficient to make a Saint."

THE JEWISH CHILD.

It was the custom at Constantinople in the sixth century, at times when the Blessed Sacrament was renewed in the Ciborium, to distribute among young and innocent children the Sacred Hosts which remained from the last Consecrations. It happened one day that a little Jewish boy was brought from the schools along with other children for this purpose, and received Communion along with them. On reaching home, his father, who was a glass founder by trade, questioned him as to the cause of his returning so late from school. The child simply related what had happened, whereupon the father, blinded by fury, and carried away by his bitter hatred of the Christian religion, seized the child and flung him into the red hot furnace where the glass was melted. The mother, unaware of what had happened, on discovering her loss, filled the house with her cries and lamentations, seeking everywhere her missing child. On the third day, happening to pass by the furnace, she heard a voice calling her by name. On opening the furnace door, she beheld her child seated in the midst of the flames, alive and uninjured, and not appearing to suffer the least inconvenience from the raging element. Having clasped him in her arms, she asked him how it was that he was not burnt up in the midst of the red hot coals. "Mother," said he, "a lady, dressed in purple, often came to me during these three days, and threw water round me, to put out the fire. She also brought me food." The whole city was soon filled with the news of this prodigy, which resulted in the immediate conversion of the Jewish child and his mother. The unhappy father, however, continued hardened in his infidelity, and was condemned to death by order of the Emperor Justinian, for the attempted murder of his child.—*Anecdotes Chretiennes.*

VIATICUM OF ST. JULIANA.

St. Juliana Falconieri, a holy virgin who lived in the thirteenth century, was distinguished for her extraordinary devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. In her last

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illness she earnestly desired to receive him in the Holy Viaticum, but on account of the continual sickness to which she was subject, it was considered impossible to comply with her pious desire. Moved, however, by her earnest entreaties, her confessor brought into her presence the Sacred Host, that she might have at least the consolation of adoring our Lord and receiving his last blessing. No sooner did she perceive the object of her ardent affection, than in a transport of love, forgetting her extreme weakness, she sprang from the bed, and cast herself on the ground to adore our Lord. Then with many tears she asked as a last favour, that since she could not receive Jesus sacramentally, his most Sacred Body might be laid upon her breast, that her heart might be refreshed by the near presence of him whom she so ardently loved. Her confessor, moved by her tears and entreaties, and knowing well the virginal purity of her soul and her eminent sanctity, granted her request, and a corporal having been spread upon the breast of the dying virgin, the Blessed Sacrament was placed upon it in the immediate neighbourhood of her heart. Scarcely had the priest laid the Sacred Host on the chaste bosom of Juliana, than overcome by the sweetness of our Lord's presence, and languishing with love, she cried out, "Oh, my sweet Jesus!" and expired. Wonderful to relate, the Sacred Host was no longer to be seen. In the last expiring act of love and longing desire, with which Juliana had greeted the presence of Jesus, the Sacred Host had passed into her heart, leaving as a convincing proof the impression of the Consecrated Particle upon her breast. Thus did Jesus satisfy the longing desire of this pure and loving soul, coming to her as her Viaticum, to accompany her to his heavenly kingdom.—*Life of St. Juliana Falconieri.*

Q. Is it a great sin to receive unworthily?

A. Yes, it is; "for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself."—I. *Cor.* xi. 29.

Q. What is meant by receiving unworthily?

A. Receiving in mortal sin.

As a good Communion, my dear children, is the greatest of all blessings, so is a bad Communion the most grievous of all crimes. And why so? Because the unworthy communicant, by *receiving in mortal sin* profanes that which of all things is the most sacred

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and holy, namely, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. To use a chalice for a common drinking cup, or to turn a church into a stable, would be a horrible sacrilege, at which you would all shudder, because you well know that both the sacred vessels and the church itself are consecrated and solemnly set apart to receive within them the Incarnate Son of God. What then must be the guilt of him, who having by mortal sin turned his soul into a den of unclean spirits, invites the God of all Holiness to come and dwell therein! The traitor, Judas, delivered his Divine Master into the hands of sinful and cruel men, but the sacrilegious communicant betrays the Saviour of the world, as far as he is able, into the hands of devils. Hence the Apostle St. Paul says, "Whosoever shall eat this Bread or drink the Chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord." And again, "*He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself*, not discerning the Body of the Lord." In other words, he does not need that judgment should be pronounced upon him, for he is already judged; his sentence is written on his own soul in letters of blood, the Blood of the Son of God. It is true that even so grievous a crime as a bad Communion is not beyond the Infinite Mercy of God, should the sinner sincerely repent; but alas! how seldom is it that such a one is truly converted! One bad Communion quickly follows another; each time the sinner becomes more reckless and more hardened in crime. At length death comes, but even the terrors of death cannot soften his heart or awaken him to repentance. Weighed down by the guilt of so many sacrileges, he abandons all hope, and dies miserably in the midst of his sins.

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THE FIRST BAD COMMUNION.

Judas having determined to betray his Divine Master, and agreed with the chief priests and Pharisees to deliver him into their hands for thirty pieces of silver, presented himself nevertheless with the rest of the Apostles to receive the Holy Communion from the hands of Jesus. Our Blessed Lord mercifully sought to deter him, both by interior inspirations and repeated warnings. He told him clearly that he was about to betray him, and added these awful words, *The Son of Man indeed goeth as it is written of him, but wo to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed! It were better for him if that man had not been born.* Judas, however, obstinately closed his heart against the voice of grace, and the warnings of his Divine Master.

No sooner had Judas sacrilegiously received the Sacred Host, than the devil, who had already taken possession of his soul, entered into him with fresh power and violence, hardening his heart and spurring him on to complete his crime. He accordingly left the table, and having collected a band of ruffians, came with them to the Garden of Olives, where he knew that our Blessed Lord was wont to spend the night in prayer. "And he gave them a sign saying, *Whomsoever I shall kiss that is he, hold him fast.* And forthwith coming up to Jesus he said, *Hail, Rabbi.* And he kissed him. And Jesus said to him, *Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?* Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and held him."

The fatal deed being now accomplished, and Jesus condemned to death, Judas became a prey to the most frightful remorse. The enormity of his crime and the terror of God's judgment, were continually present to his mind, yet he did not repent. The devil, who by the bait of a paltry sum of money, had lured him on to his ruin, now dragged him down into the abyss of despair. "Then Judas," says the Evangelist, "seeing that he was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and ancients, saying, *I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.* But they said, *What is that to us? look thou to it.* And casting down the pieces of silver in the temple he departed, and went and hanged himself with a halter."—*Matt.* xxvi., xxvii. *Luke* xxii.

In this terrible history we have an awful warning of the circumstances which usually accompany, and

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the consequences which follow a bad Communion. For the miserable gratification of continuing to indulge in some wicked passion, or through the foolish fear of revealing some shameful sin in Confession, the sinner determines to betray his Divine Master by making a bad Communion. How often does our Lord speak to him in his inmost heart, saying to him as he said to Judas, "Friend, whereto art thou come? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" But his heart is hardened, and he listens not to the voice of his loving Redeemer, who would even then stretch out his hand to save him.

At length his crime is completed, but the sinner, so far from tasting happiness, finds that his soul has become a very hell upon earth. The thought of his heartless treachery, and of the awful chastisement of God ever hanging over his head, is never absent from his mind, and renders him a continual prey to remorse and fear. Yet, alas! how seldom does he seek to appease the anger of God by sincere repentance and a good Confession! His soul is possessed by a dumb devil, shame closes his lips, and his heart is hardened against the Infinite Mercy of God. Thus does he go on adding sin to sin, until at length by a just judgment of God he dies in despair.

SACRILEGIOUS COMMUNION OF KING LOTHAIRE.

A terrible example of the judgment of God on the sacrilegious communicant is related in the history of Lothaire, king of Lorraine, who lived in the ninth century. Like Henry VIII. of England, he had put away his lawful wife Thietberge, to marry another named Valrade, for whom he had conceived a guilty passion. For this he was excommunicated by the Pope, who condemned this second marriage as a most grievous crime. Thereupon Lothaire sought to impose upon his Holiness by the specious appearance of repentance, and came to Rome to be absolved from the censures of the Church by the Sovereign Pontiff, to whom he represented that he had entirely broken off the guilty connection. Deceived by his hypocrisy, Pope Adrian absolved

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him, and at his earnest request consented to communicate him and his principal officers with his own hands, in token of their reconciliation with the Church.

The day appointed having arrived, Pope Adrian celebrated the Sacred Mysteries in presence of the king. At the moment of Communion, taking in his hand the Body of our Lord, he turned towards Lothaire and said, "Prince, if you have sincerely renounced all connection with Valrade, approach with confidence and receive the Sacrament of eternal life. But if your repentance is not sincere, do not rashly receive the Body and Blood of our Lord, and, by profaning them, eat and drink your own condemnation." Then turning to the courtiers he said, "If you have neither consented nor contributed to your master's crimes, may the Body of our Lord be to you a pledge of eternal life!" Some of those present, struck with terror at the words, drew back, but the king and the greater portion of his followers consummated their crime by receiving Holy Communion.

A short time after, Lothaire set out on his return to France, anxious to rejoin as soon as possible the wicked woman whom he had pretended to dismiss. He had not gone far, however, when he was overtaken by the judgment of Heaven. At Lucca, both himself and his train were attacked by a malignant fever, which produced upon its victims the strangest and most frightful effects. The hair, nails, and even the skin fell off, while an inward fire consumed them. Thus did many die under the eyes of the king; those only were preserved who had withdrawn in time from the Holy Table, Lothaire himself, hardened by his sacrilege and his wicked passion, strove to continue his journey, until at last, losing both sense and speech, he perished miserably without hope or sign of repentance.—*Anecdotes Chretiennes.*

THE ROBBER'S ADVICE.

A certain robber chief had in his band a young man, who, being as yet unaccustomed to crime, frequently experienced great trouble and remorse of conscience in committing it. At length the leader of the band, tired of reproving him for his virtuous scruples, formed a diabolical plan to harden his heart. "Go," said he to him one day, "and make a bad Communion, and you may be quite sure you will never shrink from anything." The unhappy youth followed his advice, and soon found himself the most reckless and daring of the band. So true is it that nothing is capable of shocking those who have deliberately made a sacrilegious Communion. *Catholic Anecdotes.*

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DEATH-BED OF A BAD COMMUNICANT.

In one of the towns which border on the Rhine there lived a man who had given himself up to every passion, and had become by his life a scandal to all who knew him. Being at length upon his death-bed, his family, who were good Catholics, sent for the priest, who heard the sick man's confession, and prepared to administer the Holy Viaticum. He had already taken the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, and was about to place it on the sick man's tongue, when the latter cried out, "Stop, father, stop! I made a sacrilegious first Communion, and have never made a Communion since. I will not have two bad Communions upon my conscience. One surely is sufficient to suffer for in hell for all eternity!" In vain did the priest and the bystanders, struck with horror, exhort him to repentance, and remind him of the Infinite Mercy of God, who is ever ready to pardon the penitent sinner. He had already sunk into depths of despair, from which nothing could rouse him, and after some hours of fearful agony, expired miserably.—*Catholic Anecdotes.*

THE AMERICAN PLANTER.

In the Southern States of America lived a certain planter of great wealth, who was now approaching the decline of life. He professed the Catholic faith, but had been for very many years totally indifferent to the duties of religion. It was remarked, moreover, that a settled melancholy seemed to hang about him. He possessed everything that the world could bestow, a rich plantation, an abundant fortune, a happy and contented family, yet he always appeared gloomy and wretched. It was impossible to remain long in his company without perceiving that he was a prey to some hidden grief.

At length he fell sick, and his virtuous family at once despatched a messenger for the nearest missionary. He had just returned from an excursion among the Indians, but though exhausted with fatigue, he immediately set out, and soon arrived at the planter's dwelling. His presence filled the family with joy, for every one hoped that he would be able to afford help and consolation to the sick man, who on hearing of the arrival of the priest did not refuse to see him.

What took place in this interview is known but to God alone. After a long conversation with his penitent, the priest left him, but shortly after returned, bringing with him the Blessed Eucharist, that sacred pledge of resurrection and life. At the sight of the Sacred Host the sick man cried out

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in tones of terror, "Behold my Judge!" The priest tried to reassure him, reminding him that the mercy of God is Infinite. It was all in vain. "I have sinned," cried out the sick man; "I have betrayed innocent blood. The first time I communicated it was unworthily." So saying he covered his face with his hands, sank back in his bed, and expired.—*Letters on First Communion.*

These terrible examples, my dear children, may well serve to inspire us with a salutary fear, and to teach us according to the words of the Apostle, *to prove ourselves* by a good confession and a devout preparation before approaching the Holy Communion. They should not, however, lessen our tender love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, our entire confidence in his Goodness, and our ardent desire of receiving him into our hearts. The awful words of St. Paul, and the many terrible instances recorded of the Judgments of God on the sacrilegious communicant, are intended only as a warning to those hardened and reprobate sinners who do not *discern the Body of the Lord*, but approach the Holy Table through unworthy motives, and with hearts full of wickedness and corruption. To you who truly desire to love God, our Blessed Lord addresses himself in very different language—"Come to me," he says, "you that labour and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you."* And again, "Come eat my bread and drink the wine I have mingled for you."† "Sing praise and rejoice, for behold I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee."‡ Oh, how great a privilege and happiness is this, to have Jesus dwelling in the midst of us, always ready to comfort us in our sorrows, to counsel us in our doubts, to strengthen us in our temptations, to protect us in every danger! Cherish, therefore, always in your hearts a tender devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Come often to the foot of

* Matt. xi. 28. † Prov. ix. 5. ‡ Zach. ii. 10.

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the altar to visit him dwelling in the Holy Tabernacle. There pour out your hearts at his feet, speaking to him as though you saw him visibly before you, adoring him, thanking him, begging from him all the graces you stand in need of, and earnestly desiring to receive him into your hearts. This is what is called a *spiritual communion*, and this you can make at any time, and wherever you may be, by turning your thoughts to the nearest church where Jesus dwells in the Blessed Sacrament. But do not fail to receive our Blessed Lord, not only spiritually, but also sacramentally, as often as your confessor will permit you. If you have already made your first Communion he will probably allow you to approach the Blessed Sacrament at least once a month, and this you should do your best never to omit, for there is no more powerful means of overcoming your faults and advancing in virtue than frequent and devout Communion. As for you, my dear children, who have not yet been admitted to your first Communion, do your best to prepare your hearts to receive our Blessed Lord by correcting your faults and practising the virtues suitable to your age, especially obedience, gentleness, truthfulness, and holy purity. Say also a Hail Mary often to our Blessed Lady, that she may help you to make a very good first Communion, for it is the most important act of your whole lives, and one upon which your eternal salvation will probably, in a great measure, depend. Listen, and I will tell you a beautiful story which we read of in the Lives of the Saints. It will show you how our Blessed Lord loves to dwell in a pure and innocent soul, and how generously he rewards those who prepare their hearts worthily to receive him.

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FIRST COMMUNION OF THE BLESSED IMELDA.

In the fourteenth century there lived at Bologna, a holy virgin named Imelda, of tender years, but extraordinary piety. At the age of eleven, she had been admitted into the Dominican Convent of St. Mary Magdalen in that city, where she became the admiration of the community, on account of her exact observance of the rule, her spirit of penance, and the fervour of her devotion. Above all things it was her delight to spend hours in prayer before the Holy Sacrament, holding sweet converse with the Divine Spouse of her soul; and it was her longing desire to be admitted to his embraces in Holy Communion. This, however, had never yet been permitted by her confessor, on account of her tender years, though she frequently approached to the Sacrament of Penance, and had often and earnestly implored him to admit her to the Heavenly Banquet.

It happened one day, on the eve of our Lord's Ascension, that all the religious were approaching the altar to nourish their souls with the Immaculate Flesh of the Lamb of God, while Imelda alone was prevented from sharing in the Sacred Feast. On beholding the Divine Fountain of grace flowing so near, while she was excluded from quenching her ardent thirst with its living waters, Imelda was overwhelmed with grief, and kneeling towards the altar, poured out the longings of her soul at the feet of her Beloved, protesting that her only desire on earth was to be united to him in the Holy Sacrament. At the same moment, a Sacred Host was seen descending from above, until it remained suspended over the head of the holy virgin, who was now absorbed in an ecstasy of love. Her confessor, perceiving what had happened, ran to the spot, and taking with reverence the Host upon the paten, in obedience to this evident sign of the Divine Will, placed it on the tongue of the devout virgin. No sooner had she received the sacred particle, than the heavenly rapture of love, which consumed her soul at the possession of her Divine Spouse, burst asunder the ties which united it to the body, and she was borne in the embraces of her Beloved to the eternal sight and enjoyment of him in Paradise.—*Compendio delle Vite dei Sante.*

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SEVENTH INSTRUCTION.

The Holy Eucharist continued. Sacrifice of the Mass. Its nature and institution. The ends for which it is offered. Manner of hearing Mass. Why Mass is said in Latin. Serving at Mass.

Q. Is the Blessed Eucharist a Sacrament only?

A. No; it is also a Sacrifice.

Q. What is this Sacrifice called?

A. It is called the Sacrifice of the Mass.

So far, my dear children, we have been speaking of the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrament, given us by Jesus Christ for the food and nourishment of our souls. But the Holy Eucharist is not a Sacrament only, *it is also a Sacrifice*, that is, an offering made to God in acknowledgment of his Supreme dominion over us and all his creatures. When we speak of the Holy Eucharist in this second sense, *it is called the Sacrifice of the Mass.* As the Mass is the most sacred and solemn of all acts of religious worship, we ought to be well instructed in everything that relates to it, so that we may be able to assist at it in such a manner as will secure for us a share in the abundant fruit of which it is the unfailing source.

Q. What then is the Mass?

A. It is the unbloody Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ.

This Mass is a *Sacrifice*, my dear children. Do you understand properly what we mean by that act of worship called a Sacrifice? We mean the offering to God of some visible thing, in token of his being

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the Lord of all, and the Supreme Master of life and death. A *sacrifice* is different to a *prayer*, which is a raising of the heart and mind to God; it is different to a *sacrament*, which is an outward sign of an invisible grace given to the soul; it is different to a *sacred ceremony*, which is an outward act of religious worship, expressive of reverence or some other sentiment of devotion. In a *sacrifice* there is always something *offered* to God, and what is offered is some *visible or sensible object*, moreover *it undergoes some change* when it is offered, which is intended to express the Supreme Power of God as Lord and Master of all. There is no doubt that God himself taught mankind in the very beginning of the world how to worship him by means of *sacrifices*. We find Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam, sacrificing to God, the one the fruits of the earth, and the other the firstlings of his flock.* When Noah came out of the ark, he offered sacrifice to God of the various animals that had been preserved from the deluge. The victims were slain, their bodies burnt, and the Holy Scriptures tell us that a sweet savour ascended from them to the Lord, who promised never to destroy the world by another deluge.† In the history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the other patriarchs, we find frequent mention of sacrifices offered to God for some special end. Among others, there is the remarkable example of Melchisedech, who being a priest of the most High God, offered a sacrifice of *bread and wine* in thanksgiving for Abraham's victory.‡

When Almighty God gave the Old Law to the Israelites on Mount Sinai, he instructed them in all that regarded his Divine worship, and especially as to their duty of honouring him by means of sacrifices.

* Gen. iv. † Gen. viii. 20, &c. ‡ Gen. xiv. 18, &c.

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He taught them to offer to him in this way oxen, and sheep, and goats, and doves, and also the fruits of the earth. Thus there were *Holocausts*, or whole burnt offerings, which were intended as a token of God's supreme dominion over all creatures; *Peace offerings*, which were offered in thanksgiving for his past favours, or to obtain fresh graces; and, finally, there were *Sin offerings*, which were sacrifices of propitiation, to appease the anger of God and to implore his pardon. Yet these sacrifices were but signs and figures—acts of worship, indeed, most pleasing to God, when offered with a pure and contrite heart, but unable of themselves to wash away sin or merit grace for man. At length Almighty God openly declared by the mouth of Malachi, the last of the prophets, that these carnal sacrifices were to have an end, and give place to one infinitely more pure and efficacious, which should be offered in all places and in all ages, and by which his glory would be exceedingly spread and magnified among men. "From the rising of the sun," said he, "even to the going down, my Name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my Name a clean oblation."*

My dear children, in these prophetic words we have a clear and striking announcement of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which, at every hour of the day and in every country under the sun, is offered to Almighty God, whereby his Name is wonderfully magnified and exalted among Gentile nations. And what oblation could there be so *clean*, so pure, as the Body and Blood of Jesus, which in the Mass are offered to the Eternal Father? For the Mass is, as the Catechism says, *the unbloody Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ.* Hence the Mass is in

* Malachi i. 11.

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reality the selfsame sacrifice as that of Jesus on the cross, differing only in the *manner* in which it is offered. Look at the sacrifice of Calvary. There, our Blessed Lord was both priest and victim. He was the *victim* because it was He who was tortured and slain in atonement for the sins of men. He was also the *priest,* for though his Blood was shed by the hands of cruel men, it was *He* that offered his own innocent Body as a most sweet and acceptable sacrifice to his Heavenly Father.

Look now at the Sacrifice of the Mass. The *victim* is the same Jesus Christ himself, who is present upon the altar as soon as the solemn words of Consecration are pronounced. The *priest* is the same, our Lord himself, the great High Priest, who in the Mass speaks by the lips of his ministers, and offers himself by their hands to his Eternal Father. Hence, when the priest consecrates the bread and wine, he does not say "This is the Body of Jesus Christ; this is the Blood of Jesus Christ," but, *This is my Body; this is my Blood,* because he speaks no longer as a mortal man, but in the person of Jesus Christ. And not only are the victim and the priest the same in the Sacrifice of the Mass as in that of Calvary, but *He to whom the Sacrifice is offered* is the same, namely, God himself, and it is offered *for the selfsame ends.* Hence the Mass is in reality one and the same sacrifice as that of Calvary, a continuation of it in fact, differing only, as I said, in the manner in which it is offered. For the one is a *bloody*, the other an *unbloody* sacrifice; in other words, on the cross our Blessed Lord poured forth his Blood for our salvation, but in the Mass it is no longer shed, for Jesus cannot be tormented or die again. The shedding of his Blood is, however, represented by the separate consecration of the bread and wine, which continually represents and shows

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forth, in a mystical manner, the sufferings and death of our Blessed Redeemer.

I told you, my dear children, just now, that not only are the *priest*, the *victim*, and the *person to whom the sacrifice is offered*, the same in the Mass as in the Sacrifice of Calvary, but that it is offered up *for the same ends*. What those ends are we learn from the next question and answer of the Catechism.

Q. What are the ends for which this Sacrifice is offered?

A. 1st, For God's honour and glory. 2ndly, As a thanksgiving for all His benefits. 3rdly, For obtaining pardon of our sins. And 4thly, For obtaining all graces and blessings through Jesus Christ.

In the first place, the Mass is offered *for God's honour and glory*. This is the first and highest end of every sacrifice—to give honour and glory to God. Being his creatures, we are bound to adore him, to glorify him, and to acknowledge him as our Supreme Lord and Master, confessing our absolute dependence upon him. Now what better homage can we render to God than by offering to him his own Divine Son, made man for the love of us? *He*, by the sacrifice of his life on the cross in obedience to his Father's Will, has rendered to him the most perfect act of homage that could possibly be paid; and *we*, by offering up our crucified Lord in the Mass for the same end, are able to supply our own deficiencies, and to adore, praise, and glorify God as he deserves.

In the second place, we offer the Mass to Almighty God *in thanksgiving for all his benefits*. The duty of thanking God for the favours and graces which we have received, and are continually receiving from his Divine Bounty, is one which is most important and pressing; it is one, however, which is much neglected and often quite forgotten. But how can *we*, poor sinful creatures as we are, thank the great

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God of heaven as he deserves? "What shall I render to the Lord," says the Psalmist, "for all the things that he hath rendered to me?" And he goes on to answer in the spirit of prophecy: "I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord."* Yes, my dear children, we will take by the hands of the priest in the holy Mass, the saving chalice of the Precious Blood of Jesus, and we will offer it up in grateful acknowledgment of all God's mercies and favours. What more excellent and perfect thanksgiving can we render to God than his own Divine Son, who died upon the cross a victim of thanksgiving to his Eternal Father for all the blessings bestowed upon mankind, and who in the Mass continually offers himself for the same end?

The third intention for which Mass is offered is *for obtaining pardon for our sins.* To make atonement for the sins of men, and pay the debt due to the Justice of God, our Blessed Lord underwent many cruel torments and a bitter death. Now in the Mass, he *applies to our souls the fruit of that atonement,* for he offers again his Sacred Body and his Precious Blood as a victim of propitiation to stay the anger of God, and draw down the Divine Mercy upon sinful man. Indeed, with truth it may be said, that it is this most pure and innocent Lamb of God, offered continually upon the altar in the Holy Mass, which alone prevents the avenging hand of God from striking with destruction a world polluted with so many and such awful crimes.

Finally, we offer up the Mass to *obtain all graces and blessings through Jesus Christ.* What, indeed, can Almighty God refuse us, when he sees before him this most pure and holy victim with whom he is always well pleased, and whose Sacred Wounds and

* Ps. cxv. 12, 13.

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Precious Blood plead most powerfully in our behalf? Already by his death upon the cross our Blessed Lord has merited for us all grace—in the Holy Mass this fountain of grace becomes opened to us, and all our wants are supplied. Ah, my dear children, we shall never know till the day of judgment for how many graces we are indebted to this Holy Sacrifice, not only in virtue of the Masses at which we assist ourselves, but of those also which are offered up throughout the world, and in the fruits of which we partake through the Communion of Saints, to which we belong as members of the Church of God.

Such, then, are the four ends for which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered. Whenever you assist at it, do not fail to unite your intention for these ends with that of the priest, at the same time praying for any special graces, and for the particular wants of your soul.

Q. Is it not also a memorial of the passion and death of our Lord?

A. Yes; for Christ, at His last supper, commanded it to be offered in remembrance of Him.

The Holy Mass, my dear children, is, as I have shown you, a true sacrifice instituted by our Blessed Lord, as a means of applying to our souls the fruits of that great sacrifice which he offered to his Heavenly Father on Mount Calvary. It is also a continual memorial of his Passion and Death, which are the most signal proofs of his Infinite Mercy and Love for man. Hence when our Lord instituted this Sacrifice *at his last supper, he commanded it to be offered in remembrance of him.* "This do ye," said he, "in commemoration of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until he come."* For

* I. Cor. xi. 25, 26.

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this reason the Church, in the various prayers and ceremonies which accompany the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, continually directs our minds and hearts to the different scenes of our Lord's Passion. The amice, the girdle, the alb with which the priest is clad, recall to our minds the linen cloth with which our Lord was blindfolded, the ropes which bound him, and the white robe of scorn with which he was clad by Herod. Behold the priest coming to the altar bearing upon his back, depicted on the sacred vestments, the image of the cross which our Saviour carried to the place of execution, and on which he died for the love of us. At the foot of the altar the priest pauses to pray, bowing profoundly during the recital of the Confiteor, as Jesus prayed before his Passion prostrate upon the earth, in the Garden of Olives. At length the priest ascends the steps of the altar, which he stoops to kiss, reminding us thereby of that traitor's kiss by which Jesus was delivered into the hands of his enemies. During the prayers which follow, he passes to and fro along the altar, recalling to our minds the sorrowful journeys which Jesus undertook from the Garden to the house of Annas, from Annas to Caiphas, from Caiphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and back again to the Roman Governor, and from the court of Pilate to the hill of Calvary. The washing of the priest's hands at the Lavabo, reminds us most forcibly of Pilate washing his hands at the judgment seat, pretending thereby to free himself from the guilt of shedding the innocent Blood of the Lamb of God.

At length the solemn moment of the consecration comes, the moment which represents the last closing scene on Calvary. The Body of the innocent Jesus was, as you know, stretched out upon the cross, nailed thereto, and then raised aloft between earth and heaven, an object of execration to the Jews, but

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of love and adoration to the Angels and the disciples of our Lord. So also does the priest at this solemn moment take into his hands the host and the chalice, which have hitherto reposed upon the corporal, and having pronounced over them the awful words of consecration, by which the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus, elevate them aloft in the air in sight of all the people, who bowing with profound reverence, unite with the Angels in adoring their hidden God. It is in this portion of the Mass, which is usually called the Canon, and which out of respect is said in secret, that the priest unites his intentions with those of Jesus on the cross, offering up the Mass for those four great ends of sacrifice for which our Lord died, and praying that the fruits of his Passion and Death may be applied to the souls of all mankind, whether living or dead. Then follows the Pater Noster with its seven petitions, which are said aloud in remembrance of the seven last words of Jesus on the cross.

The Sacrifice is now accomplished. Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, breathed forth his soul to his Heavenly Father, and the multitude who had been present at his execution, seeing the wonders that had been wrought, returned to Jerusalem, beating their breasts. This remorse of the Jews, and their expressions of repentance, are commemorated by the priest when he strikes his breast three times, and says, "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis"—"Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us." Then follows the "Domine non sum dignus," and the Communion of the priest and people, which show forth the profound reverence and tender affection with which Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and the Holy Woman took down the Body of Jesus from the cross, and with which they afterwards embalmed it, and laid it in

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the tomb. But Jesus rose again on the third day, and appeared to his Apostles on various occasions, greeting them with loving words, until at last on the day of his Ascension he led them apart to Mount Olivet, gave them his parting blessing, and ascended to heaven before their astonished eyes. The memory of these events is still preserved in the Holy Mass, for the priest, after covering the chalice and closing the tabernacle, comes forth again to salute the faithful with his accustomed greeting, "The Lord be with you;" after which he bestows on them this last blessing and dismisses them to their homes. Oh, my dear children, how many holy thoughts and devout affections are these beautiful ceremonies calculated to excite in the mind, when they are properly understood and meditated upon!

Q. How should we hear Mass?

A. With great attention and devotion.

Since the Sacrifice of the Mass is so holy and sacred in its nature, and is at the same time so powerful a means of obtaining all graces from God, it stands to reason that we ought to assist at it *with great attention and devotion.* Otherwise it is clear, that we should not only be guilty of great irreverence to our Blessed Lord, who is there present upon the altar, but should be depriving ourselves of those precious fruits which Almighty God designs to bestow upon us by means of this Holy Sacrifice.

In the first place, then, we must hear Mass *with great attention.* In other words, we must dismiss from our minds all idle and worldly thoughts, and fix them upon the great mystery which we are celebrating. We read of St. Bernard, that when he went to the Church to assist at the Holy Sacrifice, he was wont to recollect himself at the door, bidding

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all thoughts of business, pleasure, and earthly things remain outside, while he went up to worship at the Mount of God. Let us do in like manner, and kneeling respectfully before the altar, which is the very Mount of God in which Jesus is offered in sacrifice to his heavenly Father, let us give our whole minds to the prayers and pious affections which are suitable to so solemn an occasion. To play, or laugh, or talk during the time of Mass, is a great irreverence, which would not only deprive us of the graces which we should otherwise obtain by means of the Holy Sacrifice, but would be sure to draw down upon us severe punishment.

It is not, however, sufficient to hear Mass with *attention*, we must also assist at it *with great devotion*. In other words, we must not only give our *minds* to God by avoiding all that can distract us from his Divine worship, but our *hearts* also by fervent acts of adoration, praise, thanksgiving and supplication. Hence the priest says to the people in the holy Mass, "Sursum corda"—"My brethren, raise up your hearts to God," and the server answers in the name of the assistants, "Habemus ad Dominum"—"We have them already raised up to the Lord." With regard to the particular devotions which you should practice during Mass, I would advise you in general to follow the prayers for Mass, which come in your prayer books, as they contain the pious affections which are best suited to the Holy Sacrifice. If you cannot read, you could recite the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin, especially the Sorrowful Mysteries, since the Mass is as we have seen a Commemoration of our Lord's Passion. There are also many other beautiful prayers in your books, besides those for Mass, which would be very suitable for the occasion, for example, the Litany of Jesus, the Jesus Psalter, and the Stations of the Cross. To assist your devotion, you

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might go in spirit to Mount Calvary, and there kneel with the Blessed Virgin at the foot of the cross, fixing your eyes on Jesus crucified, and pouring out your hearts at his feet. Or, imagine that you behold the heavens opened, and the Son of God at the moment of consecration descending upon the altar, surrounded by thousands of adoring Angels. St. John Chrysostom tell us, that this was actually seen by a certain holy priest, who "beheld a multitude of Angels, encircling the altar, and bowing down, as soldiers are wont to do when attending in presence of their king. And this," adds the Saint, "may easily be believed, from what we know to be there accomplished."

Whatever prayers, my dear children, your devotion may lead you to say when you hear Mass, do not fail to unite them with those of the priest, who offers the Holy Sacrifice, in the name of the people. Thus you should remember that the Mass is divided into four parts, which may be called the Preparation, the Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion. The first part or *Preparation* is from the beginning to the end of the Creed, and was formerly called "the Mass of the Catechumens," because those, who were not yet baptised, were only allowed to be present during those preparatory prayers, and were dismissed before the more solemn portion of the Mass began. During this first part of the Mass we should *humble ourselves* before God, ask pardon for our sins, and profess our readiness to believe all that he teaches us by his Church. The second part of the Mass begins after the Creed, and goes to the end of the Preface, when the bell is rung for the first time. It is called the *Offertory*, because the bread and wine are then offered to God to be changed into the Body and Blood of his Divine Son. *We* should offer them along with the priest, and with them *offer ourselves*

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also, to be entirely devoted to the love and service of God. The third part of the Mass, which out of respect is said by the priest in secret, is called the *Consecration*, and is much more solemn than the first two, because during it the bread and wine are changed by the Power of God into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and are raised aloft for the adoration of the people. This raising of the Sacred Elements is called the *Elevation*, at which time you should bow your head profoundly, and *adore Jesus Christ* truly present upon the altar. You might repeat to yourselves again and again, while the Elevation lasts, that beautiful little prayer,

> "Sweet Sacrament, we thee adore,
> Oh make us love thee more and more."

Or, "May the Divine Heart of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament of the altar be praised, blessed, loved, adored and glorified now, and for evermore. Amen."

You should, also, join with the priest at this time in offering up the Holy Mass for the four great ends of sacrifice, which I have explained to you, and you should offer up earnest prayers both for the living and the dead. During these precious moments, my dear children, speak to our Blessed Lord as if you saw him before you, for he is as truly present upon the altar as he was upon the cross on which he died for the love of us. Lay before him all your wants, both of soul and body; pray for the Church, our holy Father the Pope, your parents, relations and friends, and all poor heretics and sinners. Pray also for the poor souls in Purgatory, for the Mass is a sacrifice of *propitiation*, not only for the living, but also for the dead, and will obtain for them a more speedy entrance to eternal life. Thus you may employ yourselves until the *Pater Noster*, or *Our Father*, which you will say with the priest, who

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recites it in the name of the people. The fourth and last part of the Mass begins after the Pater Noster, and is called the *Communion*. The prayers which the priest recites during it, are prayers of preparation or thanksgiving after Holy Communion. If you are not able to receive our Blessed Lord sacramentally, *communicate* at least *spiritually*, inviting Jesus to come and dwell in your hearts, and then adoring, thanking, loving and praying to him, as you would do if you had really received him. A good spiritual Communion is most pleasing to God, and is sure to draw down upon the soul innumerable graces. It may be made not only at Mass, but at any time when we are able to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and even when we are at a distance from Church, by turning our thoughts to where our Blessed Lord is dwelling in the Holy Tabernacle.

Happy will you be, my dear children, if you always hear Mass with these fervent dispositions! To assist at it, is a precious privilege, which you should esteem most highly, nor should you ever lose the opportunity of hearing Mass, even upon week days, whenever it lies in your power. One Mass well heard is of more value than all the other prayers you can offer, or good works that you can perform. Listen to the following history, which will show you how God blesses and protects those who assist devoutly at the Holy Sacrifice.

THE VIRTUOUS PAGE.

St. Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal, had in her service as page, a pious and faithful youth, whom she was accustomed to employ in the distribution of her alms. One of his fellow pages, filled with envy at the confidence reposed in him, determined to effect his ruin, and accordingly suggested to the king that he was regarded with too much favour by the saintly queen. The slander was believed, and the king, stung with jealousy, resolved to take away the life of the

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page. For this purpose he gave orders to the master of a limekiln, that if on a certain day he should send to him a page to inquire whether he had executed the king's commands, he should at once seize him and cast him into the furnace, for that he had been guilty of a grievous crime, and deserved death. On the day appointed he called for the youth, and having given the message that had been agreed upon, he sent him to deliver it.

Now it happened that the page on his way to the kiln, passed by a church at the very moment when the bell was ringing for the Elevation. As it had always been his pious custom in such a case not to pass on until the Holy Sacrifice was ended, he entered the church, and knelt down to hear the remainder of the Mass. When it was concluded, reflecting that he had not heard an entire Mass that day according to his usual practice, he remained in the church and heard two other Masses in succession.

Meanwhile the king became impatient to know whether his designs had succeeded, and by a wonderful Providence of God, despatched the accuser himself to inquire whether his orders had been executed. This being the very message agreed upon with the master of the kiln, the unhappy youth was immediately seized and, in spite of all his remonstrances, cast amid the burning lime where he was quickly consumed.

As soon as the Masses were concluded, the page who had been first despatched, hastened on to deliver his message. Upon inquiring whether the king's orders had been executed, he was told that they had, and he returned with this message to the king. The latter, seeing him return, was struck with fear and amazement, and upon hearing the circumstances, perceived at once the innocence of the page, and admired the Justice and Providence of God, who, while he protected and preserved the virtuous page, allowed the very punishment designed for him to fall on the head of his wicked calumniator.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

You will some time, perhaps, be asked by Protestants, why it is that the priest says Mass in Latin, and not in English, which everybody can understand. Tell them, that it is because the Mass is as old as the Church, and when Jesus Christ came and established his Church, the Latin language was in use all over the world, because all nations were subject to the Romans, whose native tongue it was. Tell

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them too, that as the Mass used to be said in the first ages in Latin, the Church thought it better not to make any change when fresh languages sprung up, but to keep the same language for the Holy Sacrifice in all times and in all countries. By that means she knew that no alteration could be made in the prayers of the Mass, and no false doctrine could in course of time creep in, which might be possible if the Mass were said in a great many different tongues, on account of the changes which are continually taking place in every modern language in the meaning of words, whereas the Latin language is fixed and cannot change. Tell them, moreover, that in our prayer books and missals we have all the prayers that the priest says, translated into English, and that we can follow them, and say them with him if we please, but that it is by no means necessary to do so, because the Mass is not like a common prayer, but is a *Sacrifice*, and we join in the Sacrifice, if we offer it with the priest and for the same intentions, whatever prayers we may happen to say. These are plenty of good reasons for saying the Mass in Latin, but if anyone desires another, he has it in the Unity of the Church of God, which makes it fitting that the most solemn act of religious worship, at which all her children are bound to assist, should be celebrated in the same language throughout the world ; so that wherever we may be, on entering a Catholic Church, we may not only *see* the same sacred rites, but *hear* the same familiar words, which from our childhood we have been accustomed to hear in our own churches at home.

I will now say a few words to you, my dear children, about a precious privilege which some of you enjoy, and others among you may aspire to, namely, that of *serving at Mass*. To be admitted so near to our Blessed Lord in the most Holy Sacrament, and

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to minister at the great Sacrifice in which he is offered up to the Eternal Father, is indeed a great grace, which you should strive, as far as you are able, to deserve by innocence and purity of life, and by a pious and recollected behaviour in presence of the most Holy Sacrament. The Saints of God esteemed it a great favour and a high honour to be admitted thus to minister to the King of kings; and we read of many holy monarchs who thought it a greater glory to serve at Mass, or attend the Blessed Sacrament when carried in procession, than to rule over kingdoms and empires. Do you, my dear children, imitate their pious conduct, and esteem it the greatest happiness of your lives to serve at the holy altar. *There* it is that our Lord dwells, and loves to dispense his choicest graces; and who will receive a greater share of them than the pious acolyte, who with innocent and loving heart, and reverent step and look, waits on our Lord himself in company with his minister the priest? Listen to the following beautiful legend of a priest and his two altar boys, who were so beloved by Jesus as to be invited by him to a banquet in his Father's house.

THE PRIEST AND HIS ALTAR BOYS.

There lived in the thirteenth century in the Convent of Santarem, in Portugal, a holy priest named Bernard, who was a member of the Order of St. Dominic. Being placed in care of the sacristy, he had under his charge two boys of tender age and extraordinary innocence, whom he taught to serve at Mass, and also instructed in their catechism and the rudiments of grammar. Their docility and good conduct made them very dear to him, and he did all in his power to bring them up in piety, and in tender love for the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Mother of God. Each morning when the boys came from their homes, they brought with them a piece of bread and a little fruit, to eat when the services were ended, and they were accustomed to take it at the foot of an image of the Blessed Virgin with the Divine

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Infant in her arms. The children never failed to salute respectfully the Infant Jesus, and He, to reward their innocence and piety, on one occasion descended from his mother's arms, and begged them to give him a portion of their food. Transported with joy, they gave him what he asked, and from that time they always invited the Divine Infant to partake of their frugal meal. At length they determined to acquaint Father Bernard with what had happened. "Father," said they, "the Child who rests in the arms of the Mother of God, eats daily with us, but he never brings food himself to share with us; what ought we to do?" Bernard heard with holy awe the children's story, and thus replied to them, "My dear boys, when the child comes and speaks to you to-morrow, say without fear, 'Lord, Thou deignest every morning to partake of our meal, but we receive no morsel from Thy hand. We pray Thee invite us and our Father Bernard to dine with Thee in Thy Father's house.'"

The children did not fail to do as their teacher had instructed them. On the following day again the Divine Infant sat down between them to share their meal. They then made known their petition to him, begging him to invite them and their teacher to a Feast in his Father's house. The Holy Child accepted their petition with joy, and said, "You could not give me a greater pleasure than by asking this. Yes, I invite you as you desire. Tell your master that he may prepare himself by the Feast of the Ascension. On that day I will entertain you all three." In great delight the children hurried away to inform Father Bernard of the invitation they had received. That holy man convinced of the truth of the revelation, left nothing undone to prepare himself with the greatest piety to partake of the Divine Feast.

At length the Ascension arrived, and Father Bernard, having prepared himself for the Holy Sacrifice with unusual fervour, proceeded to the altar to say Mass, attended by his two servers. To the spectators his face appeared to shine like that of an Angel, so great was the fire of Divine Love and holy desire which burnt within him. When Mass was concluded, he prostrated himself upon the altar steps, and signed to the two boys to do the same. While they thus poured forth their souls in prayer, a sweet sleep overcame them, and so they went to the Heavenly Feast of eternal life.

When the brethren of the Convent, as was their wont, went to the church to pray after their midday meal, they perceived the three bodies prostrate at the foot of the altar. The priest was still clad in his vestments, the boys in their

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white surplices, and the faces of all three shone with heavenly beauty. At first it was believed that they slept, but it was soon discovered that they were dead. Whereupon the confessor of Father Bernard, to whom the latter had made known the heavenly invitation, related in presence of the whole community what had happened to the children, and what the Divine Infant had promised them. Their funeral rites were celebrated with joy and thanksgiving, and the events connected with their death were inscribed upon the stone which was erected over their common grave.—*Legends of the Blessed Sacrament in Catholic Opinion.*

TO MINISTER AT THE ALTAR THE GREATEST OF HONOURS.

St. Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, was celebrated for his extraordinary devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Not content with assisting daily at several Masses, kneeling with reverence on the bare pavement, he esteemed it an exceeding honour to serve Mass in person, and to be employed in any way in the service of the altar. Thus for example, he tilled with his own hands the ground, in which he afterwards sowed the wheat that was destined to be employed in making the altar breads for the Holy Sacrifice. When the grain was ripe, he reaped and ground it, and made the breads which were afterwards to be consecrated. In like manner he gathered the grapes and made the wine which was used at Mass. Not content with spending during the day hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, he often rose at night, and drawn by the sweet power of Divine love, hastened to the church to visit his hidden God. No wonder that his countenance on such occasions appeared all on fire, and the flames of love, which consumed his soul, so communicated themselves to his body, that the page who accompanied him, by treading in his footsteps, no longer experienced cold, though the ground was thick with snow.—*Anima Divota and Butler's Saints' Lives.*

The glorious martyrdom, which St. Wenceslaus afterwards underwent in defence of the faith, is an abundant proof of the singular graces and the gift of heroic fortitude with which Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament rewarded his faithful servant.

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SIR THOMAS MORE AND THE COURTIER.

Sir Thomas More, the celebrated Lord Chancellor of England, took great delight in serving at Holy Mass, and though his time was much taken up with affairs of state, he frequently served several in succession. Upon one occasion a certain courtier, sadly deficient in lively faith, represented to him that King Henry would be displeased at his lowering himself to fulfil the office of a mere acolyte. "Surely," replied the Chancellor, "the king cannot be displeased at the homage which I offer to *his* King."—*The Hidden Treasure of the Holy Mass.*

It was, no doubt, by means of the hidden strength communicated to him in the Holy Sacrifice, and with which he had so often fortified his soul, that this glorious champion of the faith was not found wanting when the day of trial came, but remained firm and faithful in his duty to the King of kings, while he fell a victim to the sacrilegious ambition of an earthly tyrant.

EIGHTH INSTRUCTION.

Penance. Its Effects. Its Institution. Its Outward Sign, or the Four Parts of Penance. First Part—the Priest's Absolution.

In the Holy Eucharist, my dear children, we have, as we have seen, a convincing proof of our Blessed Lord's Infinite Bounty and Love for man; for what could he give us more holy, more precious, and more exalted, than Himself? In the Sacrament of Penance, which we now come to, we possess the strongest pledge of his Boundless Mercy and Tender Compassion; for he has here provided us with an unfailing

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remedy for all the wounds and infirmities of our souls. It is true that in Baptism he has already given to man *sufficient* means of salvation, for by its cleansing waters, he has purified us from all sin, and endowed us with those three excellent virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, which, if only turned to good account, would suffice to keep us on the right road which leads to eternal life. But, alas, how many are there who prove unfaithful to the solemn promises that they then make to God, and who fail to correspond with the grace which God gives them in that Sacrament, to enable them to carry the white robe of Baptism unspotted before his judgment seat! How many do we see, who casting from them the yoke of Jesus Christ, which they took upon them in Baptism, and which is sweet and easy to the soul, put on again the chains of sin, and submit once more to the hard yoke of Satan, and the cruel slavery of their own passions! And what would become of such, of all of us, indeed, who have ever offended God after Baptism by actual mortal sin, if our dear Lord, the tender Physician of our souls, had not in the Sacrament of Penance provided us with a remedy for these fresh wounds and infirmities. Hence the holy Fathers call Penance a "second plank after shipwreck"—Baptism being the first, whereby we have been saved from the universal deluge of original sin, and Penance being the resource still left us, if unhappily we afterwards offend God. Thus are we preserved from falling into despair, and are encouraged to hope that, by making use of this fresh means of grace, we may recover the friendship of God, and be able to appear at the last day, if not clad in the white robe of baptismal innocence, at least with souls purified by the Blood of the Lamb of God applied to them in the Sacrament of Penance.

By the word *Penance*, my dear children, we here understand the Sacrament ordained by Jesus Christ

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for the forgiveness of actual sin ; the same word may however be taken in two other senses, namely, as the *virtue of true repentance*, and as the *punishment* which we incur in atonement for sin. As a *virtue*, Penance is, and always was a necessary condition towards obtaining the Divine pardon. It consists in a true change of heart, by which the sinner detests and grieves over his past sins with a firm purpose of amending his life. It was to the practice of this virtue that St. John the Baptist continually exhorted the Jews when he said to them, "Do penance for the kingdom of God is at hand."*

If you wish to behold perfect examples of the exercise of this virtue, you will find them in King David, St. Matthew, Zacheus, and St. Mary Magdalen. No sooner were they conscious of the heinousness of their crimes, than they heartily detested them, and turning to God with a lively hope in the Divine Mercy and sincere sorrow for offending him, firmly resolved to renounce their sins, and the occasions that had led to them. It was by means of this virtue, united to the merits of the Redeemer to come, that the sins of those, who died before our Blessed Lord, were forgiven, and such indeed is its efficacy and necessity, that even the Sacrament of Penance would be of no avail, were it not accompanied with that true repentance and change of heart which is always a necessary condition towards receiving the Divine pardon.

The other meaning of the word Penance here referred to, is that of a *penalty or punishment for sin committed*, whether it be undergone of our own accord, or sent by God, or imposed upon us by the priest when we go to confession. Thus the holy hermits in the deserts did penance for their own sins and

* Matt. iii. 2.

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those of mankind by prayer, fasting, manual labour, and other bodily mortifications. We know, also, that sickness, famine, poverty, and the other ills of life, are frequently sent by God as a penance for our sins. And finally, the prayers and other good works which are imposed upon us by the priest when we go to confession, are intended for the same object.

It is not, however, in either of these meanings that the word *Penance* is here used in the Catechism, but in the sense of *a Sacrament instituted by our Blessed Lord for the forgiveness of actual sin.* Tell me, then,

Q. What is the Sacrament of Penance?

A. Penance is a Sacrament whereby the sins, which we have committed after baptism, are forgiven.

Q. Does the Sacrament of Penance forgive mortal sins only?

A. No; it forgives venial sins also; and it likewise increases the grace of God in the soul.

From these and the succeeding answers we learn, my dear children, what the Sacrament of Penance is, and how it fulfils the three necessary conditions which are required to make a Sacrament. These are not, however, explained quite in the same order as in the other Sacraments; for first we shall speak of the *inward effects* of Penance, and afterwards of its *institution* by our Blessed Lord, and the *outward parts* which compose it.

I. The forgiveness of the sins which we have committed after Baptism is, as we here see, the first and principal grace of the Sacrament of Penance. Another effect which it produces is to increase sanctifying grace in the souls of those who already enjoy the Divine friendship. There are, also, certain other graces attached to it which are not mentioned in the Catechism, but which we will speak of just now.

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1. In the first place, then, the Sacrament of Penance *forgives the sins, both mortal and venial, which we have committed after Baptism.* This it does by applying to our souls the merits of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, which, as St. John tells us, "cleanseth us from all sin."* Hence we may gather, that there is no sin, however enormous, which may not be forgiven by this Sacrament, since there is no sin which the Blood of Jesus Christ is not able to wash away. Even the treason of Judas, the greatest sin that was ever committed, would have found pardon, if he had acknowledged and sincerely repented of his crime. By this remission of sin we are restored to the Divine favour, and the kingdom of heaven is again opened to us, so that if we die after receiving this Sacrament worthily, without committing fresh mortal sin, we are secure of eternal salvation.

2. Secondly, Penance *remits the eternal punishment due to sin, and a portion at least of the temporal punishment.* It does not, like Baptism, remit *all* the temporal punishment, because justice requires that Almighty God should make some difference between those whom he forgives for the first time, and those whom he pardons after they have abused his grace, and begun again to offend him. Our Blessed Lord has, however, mercifully provided other means by which we may obtain the entire remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, for example, indulgences, of which we shall speak later, and various works of penance.

3. Thirdly, this Sacrament, as the Catechism says, *likewise increases the grace of God in the soul.* If we are deprived of God's friendship by being in mortal sin, it restores us to it; but if we are already pos-

* I. John i. 7.

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sessed of sanctifying grace, Penance, like the other Sacraments, increases it, making us more pleasing to God, more full of spiritual life, and better able to keep the Divine commandments. Thus you see, it is a very profitable thing to go to confession, even if we have no new sins of which to accuse ourselves, because we not only receive in this Sacrament a fresh assurance of God's pardon for past offences, but are likewise strengthened and secured against future falls.

4. Finally, Penance also protects us against future temptations, by giving us a title to those special graces which we may require in certain circumstances to enable us to keep from sin, and persevere in our good resolutions. This is the *Sacramental grace* of Penance, and it is so called because it is attached to the Sacrament to enable us to preserve that purity from sin which is the special end for which Penance was instituted by our Blessed Redeemer.

Q. When did our Lord ordain this Sacrament?

A. When He breathed on his Apostles and said, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven."—*John* xx. 23.

II. The Sacrament of Penance was instituted, as the Catechism tells us, upon that occasion after our Lord's Resurrection, *when he breathed on his Apostles and said to them, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven."* Our Blessed Redeemer had already before his Passion promised his Apostles to bestow upon them a wonderful and mysterious power, which should enable them *to bind and loose* the souls of men—"Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven."* He had not, however, as yet

* Matt. xviii. 18.

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actually conferred this power upon them, for He Himself was still present on earth for poor sinners to have recourse to, and many flocked to him to hear from his Divine lips those consoling words, which he so often uttered, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee." At length his Divine mission was accomplished, and he was about to withdraw himself from the eyes of men, and return to his Heavenly Father. Then it was, that he fulfilled the promise which he had made of committing to his Apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests of his Church, the power of binding the souls of men, or of loosing them in his Name from the bonds of sin. Accordingly, on the very day of his Resurrection, he appeared to his Apostles in the evening, while they were gathered together in an upper room, and standing suddenly in the midst of them, he said, *Peace be to you.* Then having shown them his pierced hands and wounded side, he said, *As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.* And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.** By these words our Lord bestowed on his Apostles and their lawful successors, the power of forgiving or retaining sin, in other words, of pardoning or withholding pardon, a power which was to be exercised in accordance with the dispositions which the sinner should bring with him to the tribunal of Penance.

Q. How is this forgiveness conveyed to our souls?

A. By the priest's Absolution, joined with Contrition, Confession, and Satisfaction.

III. In this answer the Catechism speaks of the *outward sign*, or sensible part of the Sacrament of

* John xx. 19, &c.

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Penance. This consists, as we here see, of four things, one of which depends upon the priest, and the other three on the penitent. For the Catechism says, that the forgiveness of our sins is conveyed to our souls *by the priest's Absolution, joined with Contrition, Confession and Satisfaction.* These four acts are the outward evidence of God's forgiveness; and not only are they the exterior sign of it, but by virtue of our Lord's institution they actually communicate it to the soul of the penitent. In the form of Absolution we have expressed the pardon of God; in the three acts of the penitent, Contrition, Confession and Satisfaction, the dispositions which he requires on the part of the sinner. These three acts are commonly called the *matter* of the Sacrament, and the priest's Absolution the *form*, so that you see in Penance the outward sign is divided into matter and form, as it is in the other Sacraments. There is this difference, however, that the matter of Penance does not consist of a material substance, as water in Baptism, or oil in Confirmation, but of *the acts of the penitent* in grieving over and confessing his sins, and fulfilling the penance prescribed.

Among the many miracles worked by our Blessed Lord during the three years of his public preaching, there is none of which we find more frequent mention in the Holy Scripture than the cure of lepers, by which our Lord, no doubt, designed to convey a figure of the salutary effects of the Sacrament of Penance. For the disease of leprosy has always been considered in a special manner as a figure of sin. Like sin, it is loathsome and contagious, striking the beholder with horror, and spreading itself infallibly among such as do not avoid the company and conversation of those infected with it. Hence, the leper was cut off from all association with his fellowmen, and dwelt in some cave or hut, apart from the

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abodes of mankind, until at length he was declared by the priest, to whom the judgment of his cure was reserved, to be free from all spot of this loathsome disease. It is to *his priests*, also, that our Blessed Lord has reserved the judgment of the spiritual leprosy of the soul, which is *sin*. It is to them in the Sacrament of Penance that he has committed the charge of *binding or of loosing*, of pronouncing the sinner to be as yet infected with the leprosy of unforgiven sin, or of freeing him by Absolution from all sinful stain, and restoring him thereby to all his rights as a living member of the Church of God. It was for this reason, no doubt, that our Blessed Lord, when he cured the ten lepers, did not himself dismiss them, but bade them go and show themselves *to the priests*, to whom the judgment of leprosy was committed, to show us that, though our sorrow be as pure and intense as that of St. Mary Magdalen, so as to obtain for us the immediate pardon of our sins, yet, for all that, it is to the priest we must have recourse by a good confession, to receive from him in the Sacrament of Penance the assurance of the Divine forgiveness.

The holy fathers of the Church speak with overflowing gratitude of the Infinite Love and Compassion of our Blessed Lord in providing us with so simple and easy a means of purifying our souls from the leprosy of actual sin, which would otherwise be the cause of our eternal death. Had God condemned us without hope of pardon, after we had wilfully defiled our Baptismal innocence, we could not justly have complained. Had he enjoined upon us some severe trial, some laborious journey, some difficult enterprise, before we could recover his grace, we should have had every reason to bless and extol his Mercy. But he has only said to us, "Go, show yourselves to the priests;" in other words, "Go,

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confess your sins with true sorrow and a firm purpose of amendment, and you shall at once receive my pardon." Ah, my dear children, let us set a just value upon this holy Sacrament, and since our Blessed Lord has left at our disposal so great and powerful a means of grace, let us gratefully avail ourselves of it, purifying ourselves again and again in the living waters which flow from the sacred wounds of Jesus, and which are here applied to us to cleanse our souls from sin.

The following beautiful history, taken from the life of the prophet Eliseus, conveys a striking lesson to those who wilfully neglect the easy and abundant means of grace, which our Blessed Lord has provided for us in this Sacrament.

NAAMAN CURED OF HIS LEPROSY.

"Naaman, general of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and he was a valiant man and rich, but a leper. Now, there had gone out robbers from Syria, and had led away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid, and she waited upon Naaman's wife. And she said to her mistress, *I wish my master had been with the prophet that is in Samaria. He would certainly have healed him of the leprosy which he hath!* Then Naaman went to his lord and told him. And the king of Syria said to him, *Go, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.*

"And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. And brought the letter to the king of Israel in these words, *When thou shalt receive this letter, know that I have sent to thee Naaman my servant, that thou mayest heal him of his leprosy.* And when the king of Israel had read the letter, he rent his garments and said, *Am I God, to be able to kill and give life, that this man hath sent to me to heal a man of his leprosy? Mark and see, how he seeketh occasions against me.* And when Eliseus, the man of God, had heard this, he sent to him saying, *Why hast thou rent thy garments? Let him come to me, and let him know that there is a prophet in Israel.*

"So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Eliseus. And Eliseus sent a

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messenger to him saying, *Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and thou shalt be clean.* Naaman was angry, and went away, saying, *I thought he would have come out to me, and standing would have invoked the name of the Lord his God, and touched with his hands the place of the leprosy, and healed me. Are not the Abana and the Pharphar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel, that I may wash in them and be made clean?* So as he turned and was going away in indignation, his servants came to him, and said to him, *Father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it, how much rather what he now hath said to thee, Wash and thou shalt be clean!*

"Then he went down, and washed in the Jordan seven times, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was made clean. And returning to the man of God with all his train, he said, *Now I know there is no other God in all the earth but only in Israel.*"—IV. KINGS 5.

THERE IS MERCY FOR EVERY SIN.

A certain woman, who was a great sinner, was one day crossing a church, which she had entered with the sole intention of shortening her way, when she perceived a number of people crowding in, as if to assist at some public service. Moved by curiosity, she took her seat among the rest, and the crowd increasing, she soon found herself so surrounded that it was impossible to think of withdrawing. Soon after, a venerable priest entered the pulpit, and began to preach on the Goodness of God to sinners. Among other things, he several times repeated these words, "My brethren, there is mercy for every sin, provided that the sinner repents." These words touched the heart of the woman and became deeply impressed upon her mind.

No sooner was the sermon ended, than this poor sinner made her way through the crowd, and as the preacher came down from the pulpit, pulled him by the sleeve, saying to him with great simplicity, "Father, is it really true that there is pardon for every sin?" "Certainly," he replied, "God forgives all sinners, if they only repent." "But there are many kinds of sinners," she answered; "does God forgive them all, without any exception." "Assuredly he does," replied the priest, "provided that they detest their sins." "But will he pardon me," said the woman, "who for fifteen years have been committing the most grievous crimes?"

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"Undoubtedly he will," replied the missioner, "if you only detest them, and give up committing them." "If that is the case, father," said the woman, "please to tell me at what hour you can hear my confession." "Immediately," said the priest, pointing to his confessional. "Kneel down there, and I will be with you directly." Accordingly, having returned from the sacristy, he heard her confession, which she made with sentiments of the deepest compunction.

Her confession being completed, the poor woman acquainted her confessor with the extreme danger to which she would be exposed were she to return to her usual place of abode to pass the night. As, however, it was impossible at that hour to procure her another shelter, he allowed her to remain in the church during the night, a permission of which she gladly availed herself. On the following morning, when the doors were opened, she was found lifeless in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin. There, prostrate on the ground, which she had watered with her tears, she had bewailed the sins of her life so sincerely, that she had expired from excess of grief—a true victim of penance, and striking example of the truth of those words, which had been the means of her conversion, "There is mercy for every sin, provided that the sinner repents."—*Catholic Anecdotes.*

We now go on to speak of the four parts of Penance, which compose the *outward sign* of the Sacrament. First, the Catechism speaks of the priest's *Absolution*, and afterwards of the acts of the penitent, *Contrition*, *Confession* and *Satisfaction.*

Q. What is the priest's absolution?

A. It is the form of words used by the priest: I absolve thee from thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Yes, Absolution is *the form of words used by the priest* when he pronounces pardon over the penitent sinner. These words are uttered in the Latin language, which the Church uses in the administration of the Sacraments, but the meaning of them is, *I absolve thee from thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* It is by means of

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these words, spoken by the priest in the name of Jesus Christ, that the sins of those who humbly confess them with true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment, are washed away in the Precious Blood of our Divine Redeemer.

You will have noticed, perhaps, my dear children, that the prayer, which the priest says over you when you go to confession, is longer than the form here given. The reason is, that the priest adds to the words of absolution certain other prayers which he also says in Latin. First of all, he prays that God may have mercy on you and forgive you your sins. Then, in the name of Jesus, and by the authority of the Church, he frees you from every bond of ecclesiastical punishment which you may have incurred, and which might prevent the grace of God from descending into your hearts. After this, he pronounces over you the solemn words of absolution given in the Catechism. Finally, he prays that the Passion of our Lord, the merits of the Blessed Virgin and all the Saints, and your own good actions and patient sufferings, may all serve to secure for you the full remission of your sins, an increase of Divine grace, and the possession of the rewards of eternal life.

Absolution being a necessary part of the outward sign of the Sacrament of Penance, it follows that whenever it is not given, the Sacrament is incomplete, and we do not receive thereby the Divine pardon. It is of great importance, therefore, for you to notice when you go to confession, whether the priest absolves you or not, because if he does not absolve you, you will be obliged to confess your sins again, since they are not yet forgiven. If, however, you go next time to the same priest, it would be sufficient to accuse yourselves in general of what you had confessed before, saying for example, "Father, I accuse myself of all

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the sins I confessed to you last time, when you did not give me absolution." But how can you know, my dear children, whether the priest does absolve you, since you are not Latin scholars, and are therefore unable to understand the meaning of his words? Listen, and I will tell you. In the first place, when the priest gives you absolution, he always tells you so, saying for example, "Now, make an act of contrition, *while I give you absolution.*" In the second place, the prayer, which he says over you when he gives you absolution, is *a long one*, containing, as I have already shown you, a good deal besides the words, "I absolve you, &c." On the other hand, when he does not give you absolution, he says to you, "Make an act of contrition, *while I give you a blessing,*" and immediately he gives you a very short blessing, saying in Latin, "May Almighty God bless you, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen." So that you can easily know, if you take a little notice, whether you receive absolution or not, and you must be sure to tell the priest the next time you go to confession.

But how is it, you will perhaps ask, that you do not always receive absolution when you go to confession? It is, my dear children, because our Blessed Lord has appointed the priest to act as a *judge* in this Sacrament, to bind or to loose, to retain or to forgive the sins which you confess. When a criminal is brought before a judge, he is not always acquitted. Indeed, at human tribunals sentences of acquittal are rare; more commonly, the sentence is one of condemnation and punishment. But the Sacrament of Penance is a tribunal of mercy. Guilt may be proved against the penitent, nay he confesses it, and yet in most cases he hears from the lips of the judge the sentence of pardon. But, alas! it is not always in the power of the confessor to pronounce such a

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sentence. Sometimes it is clear that the penitent is unfitted for it, either because he is ignorant of the truths of religion, or is hardened in guilt, or will not restore ill-gotten goods, or refuses to abandon the occasions of sin, &c. In these and other cases, the priest cannot loosen, he must bind—he cannot forgive, he must retain. And why so? Because the penitent does not bring that which is necessary on his part to complete the Sacrament, namely, a good confession, true contrition, and a firm resolution to amend his life, and make satisfaction for his past offences. In such a case the sinner must humbly submit to the judgment of his confessor, and pray earnestly to God to change his heart, so that when he again approaches to the sacred tribunal, he may have the consolation of hearing those sweet words of pardon from the lips of God's minister, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee."

The beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son, related to his disciples by our Blessed Redeemer, conveys to us, not only an excellent example of the interior dispositions with which we should arise from sin and present ourselves before our Heavenly Father in the tribunal of Penance, but also a convincing proof of the boundless love and tender compassion with which he there awaits and pardons the penitent sinner.

PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

"A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, *Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me.* And he divided unto them his substance.

"And not many days after, the younger son gathering all together, went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his substance living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.

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"And returning to himself, he said, *How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger! I will arise and will go to my father, and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am not now worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants.'*

"And rising up he came to his father, and when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, I am not now worthy to be called thy son.* And the father said to his servants, *Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; because this my son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found.* And they began to be merry.

"Now his elder son was in the field, and when he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing; and he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, *Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf because he hath received him safe.* And he was angry and would not go in. His father, therefore, coming out began to entreat him. And he answering, said to his father, *Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandment, and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son hath come, who hath devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.* But he said to him, *Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine. But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found.*"—LUKE xv. 11—32.

NINTH INSTRUCTION.

Penance continued. Second Part—Contrition: its qualities. Purpose of Amendment. Motives of Contrition. Different kinds of Sorrow. Means of obtaining Contrition.

You have already learnt, my dear children, in the last instruction, that the outward or visible part of

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the Sacrament of Penance consists in four things, namely, in the priest's Absolution, and in Contrition, Confession and Satisfaction on the part of the penitent. I also explained to you what we mean by Absolution, and how important it is for you to know and remember when you receive it. We now go on to speak of the other three parts of Penance, and first of *Contrition*, which is the most important of all.

But why, you will ask, is Contrition of more importance than either Confession or Satisfaction, which are both enjoined by our Blessed Lord, and form part of the Sacrament? It is because Contrition is always a necessary condition towards obtaining God's pardon, whereas there are cases in which Confession and Satisfaction are of necessity dispensed with. Suppose, for example, that a person is seized with a sudden illness, accompanied with loss of speech. He is unable to make his confession, or to perform a penance, and yet, if he is truly sorry for his sins, and receives absolution, his sins are forgiven him. But, on the other hand, however carefully he might have made his confession, and however willingly he might have accepted his penance, absolution would profit him nothing if he had not true contrition; for Almighty God, who is infinitely just, can never forgive us a sin for which we are not sorry. Let us try, then, to understand what it is that Contrition consists in, and how we may best obtain it, in order that we may be sure, when we come to confession, of having that true sorrow which God requires from us as a necessary condition towards receiving his pardon.

Q. What is Contrition?

A. Contrition is a hearty sorrow for our sins, by which we have offended so good a God, with a firm purpose of amendment.

From this answer we may gather, that *Contrition*,

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or sorrow for sin, to be true and genuine, must have four qualities: it must be *internal*, *supernatural*, *sovereign* and *universal*. Moreover, it must be accompanied with *a firm purpose of amendment*.

In the first place, Contrition must be *internal*, for the Catechism says that it is *a hearty sorrow*, that is, a sorrow of the heart, not of the lips or other external senses. Hence it does not consist in tears or words, or in the rending of garments or sprinkling of ashes, or in any other outward expression of grief, but in *the interior dispositions of the heart*, detesting sin and grieving over it as an offence against God. "Rend your hearts and not your garments," said Almighty God to the Jews, when they contented themselves with a mere outward show of sorrow which in reality they did not feel.* To express this rending of the heart, the word *Contrition*, which means properly *a bruising*, is used in Holy Scripture. Thus King David, when describing the dispositions of a true penitent in the beautiful Psalm *Miserere*, says, "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a *contrite* and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."† It is true that outward expressions of sorrow, such as tears, acts of contrition, &c., are by no means to be blamed, nay are rather to be admired when they truly express the sentiments of the heart; but we must always remember that contrition does not consist in these things, but in a hearty detestation of sin, and sincere sorrow of the will for the offence committed against God.

In the second place, Contrition must be *supernatural*, that is, it must be the work of Divine grace in the soul, and founded on motives revealed to us by God himself. Hence, it is not sufficient to be sorry for our sins, because they have brought us into

* Joel ii. 13. † Ps. L. 19.

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disgrace, or reduced us to poverty, or destroyed our bodily health. These are mere *natural* motives, and the sorrow founded on them would be a mere *natural* sorrow. The sorrow required to obtain for us the pardon of our sins in this Sacrament is of a much higher kind. It is, as the Catechism says, a *sorrow for our sins by which we have offended so good a God.* This is a *supernatural motive*, something above our nature, for it is revealed to us by God himself, how great an evil it is to offend him. Hence the sorrow founded on the evil of sin as an offence against God, is a *supernatural sorrow.* In the same way, if we are sorry for our sins on account of the sufferings which our Blessed Lord has endured by way of atonement for them, or on account of the loss of heaven, or the eternal torments of hell, which are the consequence of sin, our sorrow is likewise *supernatural*, because these are supernatural motives, revealed to us by God himself, and taught us by his Church.

In the third place, Contrition must be *sovereign*, that is, it must be *the greatest of all sorrows*, as the sovereign of a country is the greatest or highest person therein. There are many kinds of sorrow which may affect us. We are sorry when we are sick or in pain, sorry when we are insulted or spoken ill of, sorry at the death of friends and relations. But our sorrow for sin must be greater than our sorrow for any of these things. And why? Because sin is "an offence against God," and it is a greater evil that God should be offended than that any temporal misfortune should befall us. It may happen, however, that we may *feel more sensible grief* at sickness, pain, insults, or the loss of friends than we do at the evil of sin, so as to shed more tears, for example, at these things which are not real evils, than at sin which is the greatest of evils. This, however, does not prevent us from having true contrition, if, *with*

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our will, we hate and detest sin above all evils, so as to be resolved never wilfully to offend God for the love or fear of anything whatsoever. For true contrition resides in the *will*, not in the *sensible affections*, and that sorrow for sin is sovereign, which adheres to God rather than to any of his creatures.

Finally, Contrition, to be true, must be *universal;* in other words, we must be *sorry for every grievous sin* which we have committed without exception. Hence the Catechism says that Contrition is a hearty sorrow *for our sins*, not for any particular sin. Thus, it will not do to be sorry for cursing or stealing, but not for sins of calumny or impurity. And why so? Because the *motive* on which our sorrow must be founded applies to all mortal sins equally. Every mortal sin is a grievous offence against God, separating us from him, and making us his enemies; therefore every mortal sin must be equally detested. Were we to make any exception, it would be plain that we are not sorry for *the offence against God* and the loss of his friendship, but for some lower and inferior motive. Hence you see that if any one goes to Confession, while at the same time he preserves in his heart an affection to any mortal sin, he is simply mocking God, and would receive the Sacrament of Penance unworthily.

But what about our *venial* sins? Must our sorrow for these be of necessity *universal*, when we go to Confession? My dear children, with respect to our venial sins, we are not strictly bound to confess them at all, though it is very good and profitable to do so. But if we *do* confess them, we must be sorry for them, or they will not be pardoned. If there are some venial sins for which we are truly sorry, while for others contrition is wanting, we receive pardon for those for which we are sorry, but the others remain unforgiven. There is this difference between mortal and venial

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sin, that one mortal sin is never forgiven without the remainder, whereas venial sins may be forgiven one by one according to the dispositions of the penitent.

We come now to speak of that Firm Purpose of Amendment which is a necessary part of true Contrition. For contrition may be said to have two faces, one to look back to the past with detestation and sorrow, and the other to look forward to the future with courage and good resolutions.

Q. What is a firm purpose of amendment?

A. It is a resolution, by the grace of God, to avoid not only sin, but also the occasions of it.

Yes, my dear children, a Firm Purpose of Amendment *is a resolution* taken by the sinner that he will in future, relying not on his own strength but on *the grace of God, avoid sin*, and that he will also shun *all occasions that may lead him to it.* Without such a resolution there can be no true sorrow of heart for past sins. What would you think of a child who, after grievously offending his parents, comes to ask their pardon, but at the same time is ready to repeat the offence as soon as he has obtained forgiveness? Or what would you say of a thief, who pleading sorrow for his misdeeds, receives pardon from the judge, but begins to steal from the bystanders as he leaves the court? You would say that they were both hypocrites, and that their sorrow was a sham sorrow, because they had no real purpose of amendment. Let us see, then, in what consists this *purpose of amendment* which is required by God as a necessary condition of his pardon, and what qualities it must have in order to be true and genuine.

In the first place, our purpose of amendment must be *firm*; we must be resolved to suffer every evil and to make every effort rather than offend God. Some

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content themselves with a mere *wish* and *desire* to be good, but are not prepared to make any effort or sacrifice to avoid sin. They say to themselves, "I should like to be good, and to keep from sin; but I know I shall never be able, and that I am sure to fall back again." Those, on the contrary, who have a firm purpose of amendment, have their minds fully made up on the subject. They say, "I am quite determined, by God's grace, that I will not fall back into my sins. I know I am weak, but then I know that God is All Powerful, and that he is always ready to help me. 'I can do all things,' as St. Paul says, 'in him that strengtheneth me.'"* Thereupon they resolve to fight generously against temptation, and to invoke continually the Divine assistance, relying on God's promise by the mouth of the Psalmist: "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee;"† in a word they are determined never to yield themselves vanquished, but to fight bravely until they have secured the victory.

Secondly, our purpose of amendment must be *universal*, as our sorrow must be universal. In other words, we must be firmly resolved *to avoid every mortal sin*, without any reserve or exception. We read in holy Scripture, that king Saul was commanded by God, when he went to battle with the Amalecites, to put them all to the sword, to destroy all their cattle, and to burn all their goods. But what did he do? He slew the greater part of the men and cattle, and burnt a large quantity of their goods, but he saved the life of the king, Agag, and preserved whatever was most valuable among their cattle and possessions. Many penitents imitate Saul. They purpose to avoid most of their sins, but there is some wicked habit which they cannot bring them-

* Phil. iv. 13. † Ps. xlix. 15.

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selves to abandon, some dangerous friendship which they will not relinquish, some injury which they refuse to pardon, &c. Such persons want to divide their heart, to give half to God and half to the devil. They forget that our Blessed Lord has plainly declared, that "No man can serve two masters."* God is our Sovereign Lord and Master, and he will not be satisfied with a divided obedience.

Finally, the purpose of amendment must be *efficacious*, that is, it must be such as to cause us to take all the means necessary to avoid sin. Now, the principal means of avoiding sin is *to avoid the occasions of it.* Hence the Catechism mentions this as a necessary condition of a firm purpose of amendment. "It is a resolution," it says, "by the grace of God to avoid not only sin, *but also the occasions of it.*" Now, what is it that we mean by the occasions of sin? We mean those persons, places, amusements, &c., which are likely to lead us into it. For example, you have been in the habit of playing with certain children who have taught you by their example to say bad words, to steal, or do other wicked things. You accuse yourself of these sins when you come to Confession, and say that you are sorry; but your sorrow is not real unless you are determined to avoid those bad companions altogether for the future. Perhaps you have fallen into sin by frequenting some particular house, or going to some place of amusement; thus drunkards, for example, usually fall into sin in the public-house, and young people are often exposed to extreme danger by frequenting plays and dances. If this be the case, you must be fully resolved to shun that place, to give up that dangerous amusement; otherwise your sorrow is not real, because it is not *efficacious.* It is in vain to

* Matt. vi. 24.

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promise that you will not sin again, if you are not also prepared to avoid the dangerous occasions that lead you into sin. He that loves the danger, still cherishes an affection to the sin, and exposes himself to the certainty of another fall, according to the words of the Wise Man: "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it."*

Besides the resolution of avoiding the occasions of sin, a firm purpose of amendment also includes a determination to repair, as far as possible, the injuries inflicted on our neighbour by our past sins. He who has stolen his neighbour's goods, must be resolved to restore them to the last farthing. He who by calumny or detraction has taken away his neighbour's character, must be determined to repair the injury to the best of his power. He who has injured his neighbour in any way, must resolve to make him due compensation. For there can be no true sorrow for our past sins if we are not anxious to prevent, as far as we can, the evil consequences of them. Hence, when Zacheus the publican was converted by our Blessed Lord, he gave to the poor half his goods, and to each of those whom he had wronged, he restored fourfold the value of what he had taken.†

Before we go on to speak of the *Motives of Contrition*, I will relate to you a consoling example to show you the power which true contrition has to purify the soul from sin.

THE POWER OF TRUE CONTRITION.

A young man, having unhappily fallen into certain shameful sins, was so overcome with fear that, for a long time, he could not bring himself to accuse himself of them in confession. Meanwhile, the terror of God's judgment on the one hand, and on the other the natural fear which he had of confessing his sins, affected him so far that his body pined

* Ecclus. iii. 27. † Luke xix. 8.

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away with the anguish of his mind. At length, touched by God's grace, he took a generous resolution of going to confession, and for this purpose presented himself to the Prior of a Cistercian Monastery. No sooner had he begun to accuse himself of his sins than God in reward for the victory which he had gained over himself, bestowed upon him the grace of such perfect contrition that his voice was lost in his sobs and tears, and he was unable to utter a single word. Thereupon the Prior bade him go and write down his sins and return to him on the following day.

The youth did as he was directed, and returning the next day, again tried to proceed with his confession, but in vain. Seeing that all his efforts were unavailing, he put the paper which contained the list of his sins into the hands of the Prior. The latter having read it, found so many difficult cases connected with the crimes which he had committed, that he requested his penitent's leave to consult the Abbot concerning them. The young man willingly consented, and left with his Confessor the paper on which his sins were written, in order that the Abbot might be fully informed of the state of his conscience. But wonderful to relate! as soon as the latter unfolded the writing, he found nothing but a clean sheet of paper, which appeared indeed to have been once written on, but from which every word had been carefully erased. The Confessor, who had himself read the writing, was filled with amazement, but soon recognised in the event an evident mark of God's Mercy towards his devout penitent. Thereupon returning to the young man, he informed him of what had happened, and bidding him kneel at his feet, pronounced over him the words of absolution; "for though," said he, "it is evident that God in reward of your sincere contrition has blotted out your sins from your soul as he has effaced the marks of the writing from this sheet of paper, yet, to fulfil the Divine commandment, it is necessary that your sins should be submitted to the keys of the Church. Go then in peace, and preserve unspotted the purity of your soul which God has restored to you." At these words the penitent, dissolved in tears, gave glory to God who had thus wonderfully shown his Infinite Mercy in favour of the repentant sinner.—*Cistercian Legends and Manuel des Confesseurs.*

Q. What is the best motive to be sorry for our sins?

A. The love of God, who is infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us.

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Q. What other motives have we to be sorry for our sins ?

A. Because by them we lose heaven and deserve hell.

We now come to speak of the *Motives* on which true contrition must be founded. The Catechism mentions four principal ones, namely, the Goodness of God in himself, his Goodness to us, the Rewards of heaven, and the Punishments of hell. These are truths revealed to us by God, being beyond our natural knowledge and understanding. If, then, our sorrow for sin be founded on any of these motives it will be a *supernatural* sorrow, which is one of the conditions required for true contrition.

The first of these motives, *the Goodness of God in himself*, is the most excellent of all motives of contrition. God is infinitely Pure and Holy, he is infinitely Good and Amiable, he is infinitely Great and Powerful ; *therefore* he ought to be loved, and served, and obeyed by all his creatures. If we are sorry for not having kept his commandments on account of the claims which he has in his own nature to our love and obedience, then we have *perfect* sorrow, because it arises from the pure love of God, and is not founded on, though it does not exclude, the thought of our own interest. This perfect contrition is so pleasing to God, that whoever possesses it, receives immediate pardon for his sins, even before he comes to confess them. For it is impossible that any one, who loves God with so pure a love, can remain his enemy. Such a one is, however, obliged to confess his sins when opportunity offers, in order to fulfil the precept of the Church, and to receive the assurance of his pardon from the lips of the priest.

Since a pure act of perfect contrition is sufficient to obtain the pardon of our sins, even without the Sacrament of Penance, it is of great importance that we should know how to make one, in case death were

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to come suddenly upon us when in a state of sin, without time or means to make our confession. In such a case, whether of sickness, or fire, or shipwreck, or sudden accident, we should at once turn to God, saying to him from the bottom of our hearts, "Oh, my God, because thou art so good and so worthy of my love, I am sorry from my heart for having ever offended thee, and by thy grace I will never sin again." The act of contrition also which comes in the Catechism, "Oh, my God, who art infinitely good, and always hatest sin," &c., is an act of perfect sorrow, and we should not fail to repeat it with fervour, if ever we have the unhappiness of offending God.

The second motive of Contrition mentioned in the Catechism is the *Infinite Goodness of God to us.* He is our *Creator*, having made us to his own image and likeness, and raised us above all the other works of his hands by endowing us with souls capable of knowing and loving him. He is our continual *Preserver* and constant *Benefactor*, who bestows upon us at every moment fresh proofs of his Bounty and Love, and has in store for us the eternal joys and delights of Paradise. He is our *Redeemer*, having taken our human nature to redeem us from sin and hell at the price of his own cruel sufferings and bitter death. Finally, he is the *Sanctifier* of our souls; for he continually purifies and enriches them with his grace, which he bestows upon us by means of Prayer and the Sacraments. You see, then, what claims Almighty God has in his own Bounty and Goodness towards us, to our continued love and obedience, and how deeply grieved we ought to be for offending One to whom we owe so many inestimable favours.

The third motive of Contrition for our sins, is *because by them we lose heaven.* This motive is not so excellent as the two we have mentioned, because

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there is more thought of self in it. Nevertheless it is a good motive, and the sorrow founded on it is sufficient to obtain the pardon of our sins in the Sacrament of Penance, if at least we grieve at the thought of being separated for ever from God, the sweet possession of whom forms the principal delight of the Blessed in heaven. If we have no thought of God in our contrition, it is a mere *natural* sorrow, which is never sufficient to obtain the pardon of our sins.

The last motive of Contrition here mentioned, is that by our sins *we deserve hell.* This is the lowest motive of all, because in it there is the most of self. Still it is sufficient to obtain the pardon of sin in the Sacrament of Penance, if, as I have said, it contains some thought of God. Indeed, the chief torment of hell is the loss of God, as the possession and enjoyment of him is the principal happiness of the Saints. If, then, we are sorry for deserving hell, inasmuch as we are thereby deprived for ever of the sight and possession of God, our sorrow is a *supernatural* sorrow, and is sufficient with the help of the Sacrament of Penance to obtain our pardon.

From what I have said, my dear children, we may conclude that there are *three kinds of sorrow*, the first *perfect*, the second *imperfect*, but sufficient for the Sacrament, the third *useless and even sinful.*

The first is, when we are sorry for our sins, because they are an offence against God, who is infinitely good in himself, and infinitely worthy of our love and obedience. This is *perfect Contrition*, and obtains for us pardon of our sins, even before we confess them, though the obligation of going to confession still continues. Of this sorrow we have a beautiful example in holy king David, and also in St. Mary Magdalen.

The second is, when we are sorry for offending

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God, because he has been so good to us, because his Divine Son has undergone such cruel sufferings for the love of us ; or because our sins would separate us from him for all eternity. This kind of sorrow is less perfect than the first, and is usually called *Attrition*. It is sufficient with the help of the Sacrament of Penance to obtain our pardon, but not without it.

The third kind of sorrow is, when we repent of our sins simply on account of the punishment they bring upon us. This sorrow springs simply from fear, and contains no thought of God or of his love ; hence it is called a *servile sorrow*, because it is like the sorrow of a slave, who grieves for a fault simply through fear of the rod. A sorrow such as this, so far from pleasing God or obtaining his pardon, is even sinful, because the sinner retains in his heart an affection to sin, and would be glad to go on sinning were it not for the punishment which he dreads.

Of this false sorrow we have an awful example in the history of Antiochus Epiphanes, the great persecutor of the Jews, which I will now relate to you.

MISERABLE END OF ANTIOCHUS.

Antiochus Epiphanes, the cruel persecutor of the Jewish nation, who set up his idols in the holy places, and deluged the streets of Jerusalem with the blood of Martyrs, was at length himself overtaken by the Anger of God. Hearing that his army had been defeated by the Jews, he vowed vengeance against the whole people, publicly declaring that he would reduce Jerusalem to a heap of ruins, and make it a common burial place for the Jewish nation. But God, who sees the heart and knows how to check the pride of man, struck him with an incurable and painful disease in his bowels, which soon reduced him to the brink of the grave. However, he mounted his chariot, and ordered his servants to drive with all expedition, that he might sooner be able to wreak his vengeance on his enemies ; but being accidentally overturned, he was severely wounded, and was obliged to continue his journey in a litter. Meanwhile, the violence of his distemper

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increasing, he became an object of horror to all his attendants; for, as the holy Scripture informs us, the worms swarmed from his body, the flesh dropped off his bones, and the stench which exhaled from his wounds became insupportable to the whole army. At the same time, he suffered the most frightful and excruciating pains.

In the midst of his torments, recognising the Hand of God punishing him for his crimes, he sought to appease his Anger by loud supplications and deceitful promises. He implored pardon for what he had done, and engaged in future to befriend the Jews, to liberate their city, to adorn the temple, nay, even to become a Jew himself, and to go from place to place publishing everywhere the glory of God. But his heart was not changed; his sorrow was dictated only by a servile fear, without a thought of God's love, or a real intention to amend his life. Therefore Almighty God heard him not, and he perished miserably in his sins, a terrible example to those who seek to impose upon God by delusive promises and a sham repentance.—II. *Mach.* ix.

Let us turn, my dear children, from the sad picture of the death-bed of the miserable Antiochus to the consoling example of the

CONVERSION OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN.

"And behold a woman that was in the city a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment. And standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. And the Pharisee who had invited him, seeing it, spoke within himself, saying, *This man, if he were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner.*

"And Jesus, answering, said to him, *Simon, I have something to say to thee.* But he said, *Master, say it. A certain creditor had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And whereas they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which therefore of the two loveth him most?* Simon, answering, said, *I suppose that he to whom he forgave most.* And he said to him, *Thou hast judged rightly.* And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, *Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for*

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my feet, but she with tears hath washed my feet, and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest me no kiss, but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but she with ointment hath anointed my feet. Wherefore I say to thee, Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less. And he said to her, *Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace."—Luke* vii.

ST. AFRA A MODEL OF TRUE REPENTANCE.

During the cruel persecution of the emperor Dioclesian, a certain woman named Afra, who had been notorious for her evil life, was apprehended in the city of Augsburg, and brought before the Roman judge on a charge of professing the Christian religion. In vain did the judge threaten her with the most cruel torments, she declared herself ready to suffer a thousand deaths, to atone for her past crimes and to testify her love to Jesus Christ. "What," said the judge, "do you pretend to the love of Jesus Christ, *you*, a woman of wicked and abandoned life?" "It is true," replied the saint, "that I am unworthy to bear the name of Christian. But Jesus Christ has said that he came down from heaven to save sinners, and the holy Gospel testifies that an abandoned woman washed his feet with her tears, and obtained from him mercy and pardon. I am unworthy, indeed, to offer him a sacrifice,* but I desire to sacrifice myself in his name, that this body, in which I have sinned, may be purified and consecrated to him by the torments I endure."

Persevering in these humble sentiments of perfect contrition, St. Afra was condemned to be burnt alive, a sentence which was immediately carried into execution. Whilst the flames mounted above her head, she was heard returning thanks to God for the privilege which he had conferred upon her, and offering up her body as a holocaust to be consumed for his honour and glory.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

THE CONFESSOR AND THE PENITENT.

A certain great sinner having gone to confession to the venerable Peter de Corboël, Archbishop of Sens, after he had accused himself of his sins with deep humility, and many

* NOTE.—Sinners under Canonical Penance were not allowed to be present at the Divine Mysteries during the first part of their probation, but prayed during Mass at the church door.

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sighs and tears, asked his confessor whether he could hope for pardon from God after so many crimes. "My child," replied the prelate, "there is not the least reason to doubt it, if you are ready to do penance for your sins." "Is it possible then," said the penitent, "that God, whom I have so grievously offended, will be satisfied with my penance? Oh! enjoin me whatever you please, I am ready to perform it. My only fear is that you will not be able to find a penance proportioned to my crimes."

The good Archbishop, filled with admiration at his sentiments, could not forbear from mingling his tears with those of the penitent, and said to him, "Your penance shall last only for seven years." "Only for seven years," exclaimed the penitent sinner; "father, my life would not be long enough to expiate my past crimes." "My dear child," replied the Archbishop, "your penance shall be still shorter; it shall only be for three days, during which you must fast on bread and water."

"Ah! father," said this truly contrite penitent, bursting into tears and striking his breast, "do not, I beseech you, be the occasion of my ruin, but proportion my penance, if possible, to my sins. Have no regard to my weakness, for I am ready to do anything to obtain a pardon, of which I am unworthy."

Thereupon the Archbishop, filled with admiration at the wonderful operation of Divine grace in the soul of the sinner, and inspired by Almighty God, ordered the penitent to say a single Our Father as his penance, declaring to him that there was every reason to believe that his sins were forgiven him. At these words the sinner, whose heart was broken with sorrow, uttered a cry of gratitude to the God of all mercy, and fell dead at the feet of the Archbishop. Thus did he expire in the very act of perfect contrition, and pass to the happiness of heaven, in all probability without passing through the flames of purgatory.—*Histoires Edifiantes.*

Q. How may we obtain this hearty contrition for our sins?

A. We must earnestly beg it of God, and make use of such considerations as may move us to it.

Contrition, my dear children, is a gift of God, and in the ordinary course of his Providence, God bestows his gifts only on those who ask them: "*Ask*, and it shall be given you." * Hence the Catechism

* Mat. vii. 7.

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tells us that, in order to obtain that hearty contrition for our sins which is required for their forgiveness, *we must earnestly beg it of God.* This it is well to do, not only at the moment when we are preparing for Confession, but for some days previously, imploring Almighty God to soften our hearts, and to bestow upon us a sincere sorrow for offending him. To offer up some special prayer, such as three Our Fathers and Hail Marys, for the grace of true contrition during some days before our confession, is an excellent practice, and one well calculated to secure for us, at the moment of approaching the Sacrament of Penance, those sincere sentiments of sorrow which are necessary to obtain the Divine forgiveness.

But this is not all. Not only must we earnestly beg of God the grace of true contrition, but we must also *make use of such considerations as may move us to it.* What these considerations or motives of contrition are, you have already learnt—God's Infinite Goodness and Amiable Perfections, his Love towards us and the innumerable blessings we have daily received from his Divine Bounty, the cruel sufferings and bitter death which the Son of God has endured for the love of us, the eternal joys of heaven promised to the good, the everlasting torments of hell and separation from God which will be the punishment of the wicked. These, and such as these, are the thoughts which should occupy our minds, and which we should ponder over at leisure before our confession, in order to excite in our hearts a true sorrow for offending God. Those miserably deceive themselves, who spend all their time before confession in thinking of their sins, and take little pains to secure that true sorrow for sin without which confession is a mere empty form.

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THE THREE STATIONS.

We read of a certain holy man, that whenever he approached the Sacrament of Penance, he was accustomed in preparing himself to make three stations or spiritual visits, one to the damned souls in hell, another to the blessed in heaven, and the third to our Lord on Mount Calvary. In his first visit he meditated on the torments endured by the devils and the lost souls, the everlasting fire, the worm that never dies, the dark prison house whose gates are never opened, the bitter remorse of the damned, and their unavailing despair at the remembrance of so many graces and opportunities that they have abused, and of the eternal delights which they have bartered away, as Esau did his birthright, for a mess of potage, a miserable and momentary gratification. Having thus aroused himself to a horror and hatred of sin, which is the cause of so much misery, he passed on to make his second station in heaven, where he considered the eternal happiness of the just, the delights of paradise which are so far beyond all human understanding, the sweet society of the Saints and Angels, the everlasting enjoyment and possession of God. "All this," thought he, "is lost by a single mortal sin, but may be regained by a true and sincere repentance." The third station he made on Mount Calvary at the foot of the cross. There, he read in the Bleeding Wounds of our Lord the infinite malice and enormity of sin, which required nothing less than the Blood of the Son of God to cancel and atone for it. There too, he contemplated with loving gratitude the Infinite Goodness and Tender Compassion of Him, who for the love of us became as a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people,* who bore the weight of our sins in his own innocent flesh,† who was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins, by whose bruises we were healed.‡ Thus did this holy penitent in these three stations gradually raise himself from fear to hope, and from hope to love; until at length, penetrated with a deep hatred and sorrow for his past sins and a loving confidence in the Divine Goodness, he entered the confessional to lay down his burden at the feet of his merciful Saviour.—*Guillois, Explic. du Catech.*

Imitate, my dear children, the conduct of this fervent penitent. Remembering always that contrition is a pure gift of God, earnestly implore it of the

* Ps. xxi. 7. † I. Pet. ii. 24. ‡ Is. liii. 5.

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Divine Mercy. Then strive to excite it in your hearts by the various reflections which you find in your prayer books, or by making in spirit those three stations in hell, in heaven and on Calvary, which will arouse you to a due sense of the enormity of sin, and fill your hearts with love and confidence towards your crucified Saviour.

TENTH INSTRUCTION.

Penance continued. Third Part—Confession. Qualities of a good Confession. Grievousness of concealing a Mortal Sin.

We have seen, my dear children, in a former instruction, that to complete the outward sign of the Sacrament of Penance, four things are required, namely, *Absolution*, *Contrition*, *Confession*, and *Satisfaction*. We have already spoken of Absolution and Contrition; to-day we come to speak of the third necessary condition, which is Confession.

Q. What is Confession?

A. It is to accuse ourselves of our sins to a priest.

Confession is *to accuse ourselves of all our sins to a priest;* for it is the *priest* whom Jesus Christ has appointed to be the judge of our souls in the Sacrament of Penance. It is to his *priests*, that our Blessed Lord has committed the charge of binding or of loosing, of forgiving or retaining the sins of men; and he has promised, on his own Divine Word, to confirm in heaven the sentence which they pro-

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nounce upon earth—"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Hence it follows, that it is to the *priest* that confession must be made, in order that he, being made acquainted with the sins of his penitent and other necessary circumstances, and being thereby able to form a prudent judgment of the dispositions of his heart, may be able to pass upon him such a sentence as will be confirmed by Almighty God from his throne of mercy in heaven.

Let us now see what *qualities* our confession must have in order to be pleasing to God. First, it must be *entire;* secondly, it must be *sincere;* thirdly, it must be *humble.*

In the first place, our confession must be *entire;* in other words we must not wilfully conceal, nor through negligence omit, any sin or circumstance that we are bound to confess. But what are we bound to confess? *All our mortal sins,* the *number of times* we have committed them, and *any circumstances which change the nature of the sin.* I will explain to you what I mean by an example.

A boy goes to confession who has committed many sins. He has missed Mass and worked on Sunday; he has cursed and sworn; he has stolen all kinds of things, money from his companions, prayer books out of a church, &c. Now when he goes to confession, he must, first of all, tell exactly *what the sins are* that he has committed. It wont do for him to say, "I have committed many sins," because sins are of different kinds and each kind must be confessed separately. Neither will it do to say, "I have not kept the Sunday," because there are different ways of not keeping the Sunday, for example by missing Mass, by doing servile work, &c. Secondly, he must say *how often he has committed each sin.* "I missed Mass a good many times" is not a sufficient accusa-

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tion, because each time that he missed it was a separate sin, and must therefore be confessed—so that he ought to say five times, or eight times, whatever it happens to be. If, however, he cannot remember the exact number of times, he must confess it as nearly as he can, saying "about five times," or "seven or eight times," &c. Finally, he must accuse himself of any *circumstances which change the nature of the act* and add to it the guilt of another sin—for example, if he has taken God's Name in a curse, he must say so, for that makes it a sin of blasphemy as well as of cursing; if he has stolen out of a church, he must mention the fact, because it becomes a sin of sacrilege as well as of stealing, and so of the rest. You see then what care we should take in preparing for confession, so that we may be able to accuse ourselves, not only of the exact sins which we have committed, but also of the number of times, and the circumstances which change the nature of the guilt.

But you will ask, what must we do regarding those circumstances which do not, indeed, change the nature of the sin, but which considerably add to its guilt? For example, it is a greater sin to steal a hundred pounds than it is to steal one, though in both cases there is a mortal sin of theft; it is a more grievous injury to a man to break his leg than his finger, though to do either is to inflict a very great personal wrong. Are we obliged in such cases to confess the circumstances of the crime that we have committed, that is, the amount we have stolen, and the exact injury we have inflicted; or is it sufficient to accuse ourselves of a grievous sin of theft or personal violence? My dear children, whenever the guilt of a sin is much increased by the circumstances which accompany it, it is always well to make them known to our confessor, though it may not always be of strict obligation. Indeed, were we to do otherwise,

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our confessor, in many cases, would not be able to understand the state of our conscience, which we are bound to manifest to him, nor to prescribe those remedies which may be necessary for the cure of our souls. If, however, the circumstances of a sin are of little importance, and do not either change the nature of a sin or considerably add to its guilt, there is no occasion to mention them ; indeed, to do so would be a useless waste of time.

Sometimes, we may happen, in preparing for confession to find ourselves *in doubt* whether we have yet confessed some particular sin ; or again, whether a sin is mortal or venial, or whether it is necessary to mention some circumstance regarding it. In such cases, we should take the safer side, and confess that which we hesitate about ; otherwise we should be in great danger of missing out something that we are obliged to confess, and should expose ourselves to great trouble and anxiety of conscience. Besides, if there is a matter that we are really in doubt of, how can we settle our doubt better than by making it known to our confessor, who, like a good and tender father, will tell us what our duty is and help us with kind and encouraging words to fulfil it ?

What I have said so far, my dear children, relates to our mortal sins. With respect to those which we know to be *venial*, we are not under any obligation to accuse ourselves of them in confession, for there are other ways of obtaining pardon for them besides the Sacrament of Penance. For example, acts of the love of God, acts of Contrition, works of Mortification done in the spirit of penance, &c., will obtain from God the forgiveness of venial sin. It is, however, very useful to confess our venial sins as well as our mortal ones ; both because it is the easiest way to get them forgiven, and also because our confessor is thus better able to know the state of

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our souls and to give us suitable advice. Moreover, we cannot always tell whether a sin is mortal or venial ; so that it is far the best plan to make a rule with ourselves to confess *all* the sins we can remember. We should, however, try to stir ourselves up to a true sorrow for the venial sins we confess, and for fear that that sorrow may be sometimes wanting, it is recommended that when we have only venial sins to mention, we should join to our confession some greater sin of our past life, for which we are more sure to have true contrition ; otherwise the words of absolution pronounced over us might, through our want of contrition, be null and void.

The second quality of a good confession is to be *sincere,* that is, made with openness and candour—without lies, evasions, or excuses. Some people will tell their confessor as little as they can help. They wait for him to question them, and then they will hardly answer his questions. They tell, perhaps, a part of the sin, or say it in such a way as to hide the guilt of it. Such a want of sincerity spoils the confession. If it is only some little thing that we deceive our confessor about, it will not make our confession absolutely bad, but it will deprive us of part of the fruit of it. If, however, we deceive him about anything important, for example, when he asks us about any mortal sin, or any wicked habit or dangerous occasion, we commit a grievous sin by so doing, and make a bad confession. But what can be more foolish than to try to hide our sins from our confessor, or cover them up so that he may not understand them? It is upon our candour and truthfulness that God's pardon depends ; for though we may deceive the priest, we cannot deceive the All-seeing Eye of Him who looks into the secret recesses of our hearts, and who only confirms in heaven the absolution of his minister, when he sees

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that we have done all in our power to lay open to him the true state of our souls.

Another way in which people fail in sincerity, is by laying the blame of their sins upon others, and this is very common. In fact, many do not come to *accuse* themselves, but to *excuse* themselves, which is no confession at all. "Father," some one will say, "I have been in a great passion, but I was provoked and could not help it. I said some bad curses, but the children took them out of me. I got drunk, but I met with a friend who made me go in with him to the public-house and treated me." My dear children, of what use is such a confession, except to anger Almighty God? Is not sin an act of our own will disobeying the Divine Commandments; and if so, why do we try to shift the blame of it to our neighbours' shoulders? It is like Adam in the garden of Paradise—"The woman gave me of the tree, and I did eat."* His excuse found him no favour with God—"Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife and hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat," therefore these punishments shall fall upon thee. So it is in confession; our excuses only serve to show our own want of humility, and the little sense we have of the malice of sin. Therefore, if unhappily we have fallen into sin let us confess with sincerity that we have sinned *through our own fault*—"through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault." This is what the prodigal son of the Gospel did when he came back to his father; for we do not find him laying the blame of his evil life on the dissolute companions who had led him astray, but acknowledging that he had sinned through the malice of his own will, in spite of the clearest

* Gen. iii. 12.

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knowledge of the duty which he owed to God and his own father. "Father," said he, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee, I am not now worthy to be called thy son."* For he well knew that God gives his grace abundantly to those who invoke him with confidence in the moment of temptation, and who avoid, as far as in them lies, the dangerous occasions of sin.

Finally, our confession must be *humble*. "God resisteth the proud," says the Holy Scripture, "and giveth grace to the humble."† Is it likely, then, that he will give the great grace of his Divine pardon to the sinner, if his confession be wanting in humility? And yet many who have grievously offended God, and who for each mortal sin they have committed deserve to be tormented for all eternity by the devil in hell, come to ask the Divine Mercy with hearts swelling with pride and arrogance. Some of them recount only their good deeds like the Pharisee of the Gospel, and enumerate all the sins they have *not* committed rather than those they have been guilty of. Others, far from the humble dispositions of the true penitent, confess the most grievous sins as if they were a matter of course, and are surprised and annoyed when the priest points out to them the enormity of their guilt, and imposes upon them in future certain necessary restraints. Should he find it necessary to question them, they answer him with evident unwillingness; and if in the exercise of his duty he is obliged to delay their absolution, they can hardly conceal their displeasure. My dear children, what fruit can they hope to derive from such confessions as these, that are so wanting in Christian humility? The true penitent, on the contrary, never forgets to treat his confessor with the greatest sub-

* Luke xv. 21. † James iv. 6.

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mission and reverence. He ever remembers that the priest is to him in the place of Jesus Christ, and that he speaks to him with the authority of our Lord himself—"He that hears you, hears me."* Hence he always addresses his confessor with respect, listens attentively to his advice, accepts with humility the remedies he prescribes, and fulfils exactly all that he commands. In a word, he comes to confession with the dispositions of the humble publican, who dared not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast and cried out, "*O God, be merciful to me a sinner.* I say to you," says our Lord, "this man went down into his house justified rather than the other, because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."†

"I WEEP BECAUSE YOU DO NOT WEEP."

A certain sinner who had been guilty of enormous crimes, made his confession one day to St. Francis of Sales, who received him with the tenderest compassion. Seeing, however, that the penitent accused himself of the most heinous sins without the least appearance of remorse or confusion, the Saint burst into tears. The sinner, far from imagining that it was his own crimes which drew tears from the heart of the Saint, asked him if he was in any pain. St. Francis replied, "I am very well, my brother, thank God; but, alas! *you* are far from well." The other boldly answered that nothing ailed him, and went on in the same hardened strain. Thereupon, the Saint's tears fell more freely. Again the penitent asked him why he was weeping. "Alas!" he replied, "*I weep because you do not weep.*" At these words the sinner was touched with compunction. "Wretched man that I am," exclaimed he, "to feel no sorrow or shame for my own enormous sins, when they draw tears from one who is innocent." So powerfully was he moved by Divine grace that he fell at the Saint's feet, shedding abundant tears, and imploring his assistance and advice. St. Francis, overjoyed at this happy conversion, now encouraged and consoled him,

* Luke x. 16. † Luke xviii. 13, 14.

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and having prepared him by a good act of contrition to receive the grace of absolution, had the happiness of restoring his penitent to the love and friendship of God. From that time the sinner gave himself entirely to the Divine service, and became a model of true penance.

This touching incident, says the historian of St. Francis, was related in after life by the penitent himself, who used to add, "There are many confessors who make their penitents weep, but I have drawn tears from my confessor himself."—*L'Esprit de St. Francois de Sales.*

The question which I am now going to ask you, my dear children, is one of the greatest importance.

Q. What if one should wilfully conceal a mortal sin in confession?

A. He would commit a great sin by telling a lie to the Holy Ghost, and would make a bad confession.

To conceal wilfully a mortal sin in confession is, without doubt, a very *great sin*—indeed, one of the most grievous we can commit. And why so? Because, as the Catechism tells us, whoever does so, *tells a lie to the Holy Ghost, and makes a bad confession*, thus outraging the Divine Spirit and profaning a great and most holy Sacrament.

In the first place, *he tells a lie to the Holy Ghost*, who is the Spirit of Truth, and the third person of the Adorable Trinity. For it is by the Power and Grace of the Holy Ghost, that the priest sits as in the tribunal of Penance to absolve us from our sins. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," said our Lord to his Apostles, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." Therefore, when we make confession of our sins, it is not so much to the priest, who is a mere man and only the instrument of God, but to the Holy Ghost, who abides in the priest by the grace of his ordination, enabling him to exercise the authority

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of spiritual judge, and to forgive or retain the sins of men. Hence, if we wilfully conceal any mortal sin from the knowledge of the priest, or answer untruthfully to any important question regarding our conscience which it is his duty to put to us, we lie, not to man, but to the Holy Ghost himself. How grievous such a sin is, and how severely punished by God, we may learn from the history of Ananias and Saphira, related in the Acts of the Apostles.

ANANIAS AND SAPHIRA.

"A certain man named Ananias, with Saphira his wife, sold a piece of land, and by fraud kept back part of the price of the land, his wife being privy thereunto; and bringing a certain part of it, laid it at the feet of the Apostles. But Peter said: *Ananias, why hath satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost, and by fraud keep part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained, did it not remain to thee, and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God.* And Ananias hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the ghost. And there came great fear upon all that heard it. And the young men rising up, removed him, and carrying him out, buried him.

"And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. And Peter said to her: *Tell me, woman, whether you sold the land for so much?* And she said: *Yea, for so much.* And Peter said unto her: *Why have you agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them who have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out.* Immediately she fell down before his feet, and gave up the ghost. And the young men coming in, found her dead; and carried her out, and buried her by her husband. And there came great fear upon the whole Church, and upon all that heard these things."—*Acts* v. 1—11.

But not only does he, who wilfully conceals a mortal sin in confession, tell a lie to the Holy Ghost, he also *makes a bad confession*, and thereby commits a grievous sacrilege. Mind, I say, "who *wilfully*

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conceals one," for if we miss one of our sins through mere forgetfulness, we do not offend God nor make a bad confession, unless it has happened through our own gross carelessness and neglect. If it has not been omitted through our own fault, the sin which we have forgotten is forgiven by the priest's absolution, along with those that we have confessed. There only remains the obligation of mentioning it in our next confession, if we then remember it.

You will say, perhaps, "there is some sin which I find it very hard to confess, can I not get pardon in some other way. If, for example, I say a great many prayers, if I fast on bread and water, if I give large alms to the poor, will not God forgive it without confession?" No, my dear children, if you have once committed a mortal sin, there is no other way by which you can obtain pardon for it except by confessing it, as long at least as you have the opportunity of doing so. You may pray as much as you please, you may go and live in a desert and eat nothing but roots and wild herbs, you may give all your goods to the poor, nay even your body to be burnt, yet God will never forgive your sin unless you confess it. Since then you *must* confess your sins if you wish to be saved, how much better it is to confess it at once; for if you conceal it, you have not only still to confess it, but what is far harder, you have to confess concealing it. Nor is this all, for you have to repeat all the bad confessions you have made since you first concealed it. Ah, my dear children, in what a wretched condition do those unhappy souls find themselves, who are tempted by false shame or fear to hide their sins! Far from finding it easier to confess them later, it appears, each time that they go to confession, more difficult to unburden themselves of the fatal secret. Thus do they go on adding sacrilege to sacrilege, until at length death comes

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and finds them with their mouth still closed by the dumb devil that possesses them. But even the terrors of death have no power to open their lips; for, distracted by fear and remorse at the sight of their sins, and the thought of the terrible judgments of God, they usually abandon all hope and die in despair.

PENANCE WITHOUT CONFESSION IS OF NO AVAIL.

It is related in the Chronicles of St. Benedict, that there was a certain youth named Pelagius, who tended his father's sheep, but led so holy and exemplary a life that every one esteemed him for a saint. After the death of his parents, he sold the little property which they had left him, and retired into a hermitage, where he continued to serve God with the greatest austerity and fervour. Unhappily he was induced by the devil to consent to an unchaste thought, after which his mind became a prey to shame and remorse, and he fell into a profound melancholy. He might, it is true, have recovered his tranquility of mind by confessing his sin, but he was ashamed to acknowledge it, fearing lest he should lose the good opinion of his confessor. Whilst he was thus brooding over his unhappy condition, a certain pilgrim passed by his hermitage, and stopping to accost him, said, "Pelagius, confess your sin, God will forgive it, and your mind will once more be at peace."

This merciful warning from heaven had no effect on the unhappy Pelagius. He had delayed his confession so long, that it appeared to him impossible now ever to acknowledge his guilt, and unfortunately he did not implore the grace of God and the intercession of Mary to enable him to overcome the false pride and shame which closed his mouth. The devil now suggested to him to continue to conceal his sin, but to perform the most severe penance for it, assuring him that in that case God would not fail to forgive him. Accordingly he entered into a monastery, into which he was gladly received on account of his great reputation for austerity and sanctity of life. Here he lived for many years, crucifying his body by the most severe penances, and was ever foremost among the monks in the exact observance of the monastic rule. In fact, he was esteemed by them as the perfect pattern of a religious, and a living saint.

At length death came, and as shame had closed his lips in

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life, so had it tenfold power in that terrible moment when the temptations of satan beset the soul with redoubled violence. Thus did Pelagius die with his sin unconfessed, but on account of his extraordinary reputation for sanctity, his funeral was celebrated with especial solemnity, and his body was interred within the precincts of the church. Upon the day succeeding the ceremony, when the sacristan entered the church, according to his custom at an early hour, to prepare the altar for the Holy Sacrifice, what was his surprise and horror at finding the grave of Pelagius open, and his body lying on the ground beside it! With trembling hands he laid the body again within its grave, which he closed up as before, that no one might know or notice what had happened. On the following morning he again found the grave open and the body exposed, but replaced it as he had done on the previous day. The same, however, happening on the third night, he durst no longer remain silent, but summoned the Abbot, who having come to the grave attended by the rest of the community, thus addressed the deceased: "Pelagius, you were ever obedient during life, be obedient now also in death. Tell me, on the part of God, if it be the Divine Will that your body should be kept in some particular place." Upon this Pelagius, sending forth a terrible cry, exclaimed, "Alas! I am damned, for concealing a sin in confession. Oh, Father Abbot, look at my body." At the same moment his body appeared like red hot iron, sending forth sparks of fire. All fled away with terror, but the Abbot was recalled by Pelagius to remove the Consecrated Host which he had received in Viaticum, and which still remained in his mouth. This being done, Pelagius bade them take his body from the church and bury it in the nearest dunghill, like the carcase of a dog, which directions were accordingly executed. Thus did the unhappy Pelagius, through his false pride and a foolish fear of acknowledging his sin, after leading a life of fruitless penance and unavailing remorse, die a miserable death, and gain for himself an eternity of torments.—*St. Liguori on the Commandments.*

PEACE RESTORED TO THE SOUL BY A GOOD CONFESSION.

A certain rich man in the Netherlands, having fallen into a grievous sin, was so overwhelmed with confusion, that it seemed to him as if death, or even damnation, was preferable to the shame of confessing his guilt. He was, however, grievously tormented in conscience, nor did he see any hope of relief, until he happened at Antwerp to hear a preacher

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say from the pulpit, that if we have forgotten a sin, we can obtain pardon for it without confessing it. Upon this he determined to do all in his power to blot out the sin from his memory, and with this object gave himself up to every kind of pleasure and worldly amusement. It was all to no purpose, for the memory of his crime still continued to haunt him. Hearing that a change of scene and fresh objects of interest frequently efface from the mind the memory of past events, he set out upon his travels, visiting various countries and spending many months in journeying by sea and land. So far, however, from forgetting his sin, there seemed hardly a moment when it was not present to his mind, tormenting him almost beyond endurance. Finally, he gave himself up to the study of mathematics, which he had often heard was a subject of such engrossing interest to a diligent student as completely to occupy the mind to the exclusion of everything else. This plan, after a fair trial, he found equally ineffectual.

At length, weary of his life, he determined to put an end to it, and actually entered his carriage to proceed to a certain place, where he thought of executing his purpose. On his way thither it happened, through the merciful Providence of God, who still continued to watch over the unhappy sinner, that he overtook a religious of his acquaintance, and offered him a seat in his vehicle. In the course of the conversation Confession was mentioned, upon which the gentleman exclaimed abruptly, "Why do you speak of that?" These words awakened the suspicions of the priest, who spoke so earnestly and affectionately to the unhappy man, that the latter acknowledged that he had resolved to hang himself, because he could not confess a certain sin, and was unable any longer to endure the reproaches of his conscience. Upon this the religious assured him that he knew of a way by which he could afford him certain relief.

Having arrived at their destination, the priest proposed to his friend a walk in the neighbouring wood. Here they returned to the subject of their conversation, and the priest, going through the Commandments, mentioned various sins which would be likely to create shame in the breast of the sinner. At length he named the crime which was the subject of his friend's long and bitter remorse, upon which the gentleman exclaimed, "That is it, father; that is the very sin the remembrance of which drives me to despair." "Kneel down then," said the priest, "and since you have now told me what the sin is, accuse yourself of it, and the rest of your faults. I will then absolve you from all." The sinner at

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these words threw himself on his knees, and freely opened his heart. Moved by the grace of God to which the chief obstacle was now removed by a sincere confession, he bitterly lamented his past sins, and received absolution in excellent dispositions. Ever after he was wont to exclaim, "Oh Confession, what peace, what happiness you bestow upon the soul!"—*Letters on First Communion.*

But, my dear children, if you tell your sins to the priest, is there not some fear that he may go and make them known to somebody else, to your parents, for example, or your teachers? At any rate, knowing now how bad you have been, will he not always dislike you, and never trust you again? It is by such foolish fancies as these, that the devil often tries to tempt children into concealing some sin in confession. But he does not care how many lies he tells, if he can only get you to do that which will make you miserable in this world, and put it in his power to torment you for all eternity in the next. Now you know very well that these are the biggest of lies. As for the priest telling your sins, he is bound by every law never to make them known to any living creature. He must endure to be put in prison, to be torn limb from limb, to suffer the most cruel death, rather than tell the smallest of your sins to any one. Indeed, since ever the Sacrament of Penance was instituted, there has never been known a case of a priest revealing the secret of confession, though there are plenty of instances of confessors suffering imprisonment, torments, and in some cases even death itself, rather than do so. For Almighty God has watched with wonderful Providence over this sacrament, in order that no one might ever be afraid to accuse himself of his sins in Confession. As to the priest not liking you when you make a good and sincere Confession, it is just the contrary. "There shall be joy," says our Blessed Lord, "before the

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Angels of God upon one sinner doing penance."* And if "before the Angels," surely it is the same with the minister of Jesus Christ upon earth. He is consoled and overjoyed at the return of the sinner to God, and so much the more because God has made use of *his* ministry to accomplish it; for like our Blessed Redeemer himself, he has been sent "not to call the just but sinners to penance."† Moreover, the confidence which you have placed in him as the minister of Jesus Christ, gives him a special interest in your welfare. He looks upon you henceforth, and loves you as his spiritual child, and you on your part know that you possess in him a compassionate and tender father. Treat him, therefore, my dear children, as such, and lay open to him the secrets of your hearts, not only your sins, but your habitual failings, your temptations, and the dangerous occasions in which you may be placed. Ask of him to direct you in your difficulties, and to advise you in any circumstances of importance, such as the choice of a state of life, &c. Ah! what help and consolation will you not derive from your confessions, if you always use perfect candour and openness in treating with your spiritual director. In him you will truly find that faithful friend, of whom the wise man says, that he "is a strong defence," and that "he that hath found him hath found a treasure."‡

Q. How many things have we to do in order to prepare for confession?

A. Four things—1st, We must heartily pray to God for his grace to help us. 2ndly, We must carefully examine our conscience. 3rdly, We must beg pardon of God, and be very sorry from our hearts for having offended him. And 4thly, We must resolve to renounce our sins, and to begin a new life for the future.

* Luke xv. 10. † Luke v. 32. ‡ Ecclus. vi. 14.

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A good confession, my dear children, depends upon a careful and devout preparation, and this answer teaches us how we are to make it. As this is a matter of the greatest importance we will defer the consideration of it to our next instruction.

Meanwhile I will relate to you a story, taken from the Lives of the Saints, which will show you how little reason you have to fear, that the priest will make known to any one the sins which you tell him in confession.

THE MARTYR OF CONFESSION.

In the fourteenth century there lived at Prague, the capital of Bohemia, a holy priest named John, called Nepomucene from Nepomuck, the city of his birth. So great was his reputation for virtue and piety, that the Empress chose him as the director of her conscience, and under his guidance arrived at an eminent degree of sanctity. This holy woman had much to endure from the jealousy of her husband Wenceslas, a man of violent passions, who nourished the most unfounded suspicions regarding his virtuous consort. Blinded by jealousy, he formed the impious design of inducing St. John to reveal to him the confession of the Empress, and actually proposed this to him, promising in case of his compliance, to load him with riches and honours. The Saint, struck with horror at the proposal, represented freely to the Emperor the enormity of such criminal curiosity, and the impossibility of gratifying it. Wenceslas dissembled his displeasure at the time, but the holy priest judged from his gloomy silence what he was to expect from so revengeful a prince.

Shortly afterwards, St. John, having ventured to remonstrate with the Emperor on occasion of an act of brutal cruelty, was thrown by him into a dungeon, with a promise of liberty as soon as he consented to disclose the confession of the Empress. Finding his resolution unshaken, Wenceslas determined to try again the effect of flatteries and caresses. He accordingly released the Saint from prison, invited him to dine at the royal table, and lavished upon him every mark of honour and esteem. When all the guests had retired after the banquet, the Emperor earnestly besought St. John to consent to his proposal, engaging on his part to preserve

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an inviolable secrecy, and to bestow upon him the highest dignities and a princely fortune. On the other hand, he threatened him in case of refusal with the most cruel tortures and even with death itself. The Saint answered courageously, that he would readily lay down his life rather than betray his sacred trust. Upon this the Emperor, transported with fury, called the executioners and delivered St. John into their hands, bidding them to employ every effort to move him to submission. They accordingly carried him back to prison, and having stretched him upon the rack, applied lighted torches to the most tender parts of his body. It was all to no purpose; the only words which passed his lips under the extremity of his torments, were the sacred names of Jesus and Mary.

After a short time, the Saint was once more withdrawn from prison, and restored to liberty by the capricious Wenceslas, but feeling a conviction that his martyrdom would not be long delayed, he devoted his few remaining days to a fervent preparation for death. As he was returning one day from a pilgrimage of devotion to a neighbouring shrine of the Blessed Virgin, the Emperor happened to observe him from the windows of his palace, and burning anew with sacrilegious curiosity, summoned him into his presence, and renewed his wicked proposal. The Saint answered only by his silence, upon which Wenceslas cried out in a rage, "Take away this man from before my eyes, and throw him into the river as soon as it shall be dark, that his execution may not be known to the people." This barbarous order was carried into effect the same night, but a heavenly light appeared resting over the lifeless body of the Saint, which floated on the surface of the waters, and the whole city flocked to the banks of the river to observe the prodigy. Thus was the foul deed discovered, and the relics of the martyr rescued from the waves. The sacred remains were carried in solemn procession by the clergy to the nearest church, where they were interred with great honour, Almighty God testifying to the sanctity of his servant by numerous miracles.—*Butler's Lives of the Saints.*

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ELEVENTH INSTRUCTION.

Penance continued. Preparation for Confession. Manner of Confessing. Thanksgiving after Confession. Fourth Part—Satisfaction. The Canonical Penances. Temporal Punishment. Indulgences.

I told you last time, my dear children, that it is on the manner of our preparation that the fruit of our confessions mainly depends. Many, alas! make bad or useless confessions, because they will not put themselves to the trouble, or because they are ignorant of the proper way of preparing themselves for this Sacrament. The first question and answer of to-day's lesson instruct you on this point. Let us examine them carefully, for if you well understand and practice what they contain, you will find it not only much easier to make your confessions, but you will derive from them much greater consolation and spiritual profit.

Q. How many things have we to do in order to prepare for Confession?

A. Four things—1st, We must heartily pray to God for his grace to help us. 2ndly, We must carefully examine our conscience. 3rdly, We must beg pardon of God, and be very sorry from our hearts for having offended Him. And 4thly, We must resolve to renounce our sins, and to begin a new life for the future.

From this answer we see that the Preparation for Confession is divided into four distinct parts, each of which is of great importance, and must on no account be omitted. If you look at your prayer books, you will find that the "Prayers before Confession" follow this very order, and that there is a portion of them corresponding to each of these four heads.

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In the first place, then, *we must heartily pray to God for his grace to help us.* For a good confession is a wonderful work of Divine grace, by which the soul is raised from death to life, from the death of sin to the life of grace. Now man of himself is utterly unable to acquire the dispositions necessary to obtain the Divine pardon. They must come from God, and God in the ordinary course of his Providence gives only to those who ask him. Therefore we must at the very beginning of our preparation earnestly implore the help of God—his help to *know* our sins, for the devil, aided by our pride and self-love, does all he can to blind and deceive us; his help to *be sorry* for our sins, for contrition is a gift of God; and finally, his help *to accuse ourselves* of our sins with candour and sincerity. We should also ask the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and our Patron Saint and Guardian Angel in a work of so much importance, one, indeed, on which our eternal salvation may depend. If it is a long time since our last confession, we should for some days previous offer up fervent prayers for the Divine assistance, imploring especially the grace of true contrition and a real amendment of life.

Secondly, *we must carefully examine our conscience.* To *examine our conscience* is to search into our own hearts for the purpose of finding out our sins; for *conscience* is that voice within us which tells when we have done right or wrong. We must remember that at the tribunal of Penance we have to be our own accusers, and that God pardons those only who accuse themselves faithfully of all that they have done to offend him. Those who come hastily to confession, without examining their consciences properly, offer to God a great insult. It is as if they did not think it worth their while to take the trouble to do what God requires as a condition of his pardon;

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hence they are more likely to incur the Anger rather than to experience the Mercy of God. But in what manner are we to search our hearts, and how can we find out our sins? By comparing our conduct with God's Holy Law, that is, with the Commandments of God and the Church. These we must go over carefully in our minds, noting down in our memory the different sins we have committed against each commandment, and how often we have thus sinned. If there is any sin which we have been in the habit of committing frequently, the best plan will be to think how often we have usually fallen into it during the week or the day, and to accuse ourselves of it in that way when we go to confession. When after a careful examination we cannot determine the exact number of times we have committed any sin, we must try to be as near as we can. For example, if a person could not remember whether it was three or four times that he had missed the Sunday's Mass, he should say, "I have missed Mass either three or four times," and so of the rest. When a person has been a long time away from confession, it will, of course, take him a longer time to examine his conscience; indeed, he should begin to do it some days before his confession, going carefully over the examination on the commandments, which you will find in your prayer books. But when you go often to confession, a much shorter time will be sufficient, especially if you are faithful to the daily examination of conscience, which every good Christian should make at his night prayers. In this case, it would be sufficient to go through the commandments carefully in your minds, considering whether you have fulfilled the duties of each, and if not, in what manner and how often you have broken them.

Having thus carefully prepared your confession in your minds, so that there may be no stopping or

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thinking when you come to the priest, you pass on to the third part of your preparation, which is the most important of all, namely, the obtaining of a true contrition for your sins. *Thirdly, we must beg pardon of God and be very sorry from our hearts for having offended him.* In what this sorrow consists you have already seen, and you have also been taught how to obtain it, namely, by earnestly asking it of God, and making use of those thoughts and reflections on the Goodness of God, the Sufferings of our Lord, and the great truths of eternity, which are so well calculated to excite us to a true sorrow for and detestation of sin. These reflections you will find in your prayer books; you should read them slowly; stopping from time to time to think seriously of them, to make acts of contrition, and to offer up prayers for mercy and pardon. On this part of your preparation you should spend some time; for what will it avail you if you make the most exact confession in the world, and are at the same time wanting in that hearty sorrow, without which no sin can find forgiveness from God?

Fourthly, we must resolve to renounce our sins, and to begin a new life for the future. In other words, we must make *good resolutions* to avoid those sins and correct those bad habits, by which we have hitherto offended God. But these resolutions must not be vague and general, such as "I will do better," "I wont sin any more," they must be directed against the particular faults into which we have fallen, and to the use of those special means, which will enable us to overcome those faults. For example, suppose that you have been in the habit of cursing and swearing. How have you fallen into that habit? By letting your passion get the better of you, and never trying to check it. Or, perhaps, by playing with other children that are in the habit of saying bad words.

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Another cause of your sin may be that you have neglected your prayers, and so the grace of God has grown weaker and weaker in your soul. Now what should your good resolutions be when you come to confession? Such as these: "I resolve not merely that I will not curse any more, but that I will try to curb my temper, that I will not speak when I am angry, and that I will pray to God in my heart at such times for his grace to help me. But this is not all, for I am determined that I will not play any more with those bad companions; moreover, I will never miss my morning or night prayers, and I will try to say them with attention and devotion." Such resolutions as these, my dear children, go to the root of your sins, and are the only ones which are of any use; besides, they are the natural fruit of true contrition, and without them there would be little reason to hope that our sorrow is real.

Having finished your preparation, you should recommend yourself once more to our Blessed Lady, your Patron Saint, and your good Angel, and go in to the Confessional. If there are others besides yourself ready for confession, wait patiently for your turn, and spend the time in going over again some part of your preparation, or in saying the Rosary or any other prayers to beg God's blessing and pardon. To play or talk with your companions while waiting for confession, is a great irreverence, and would certainly deprive you of a great portion of the grace which you would otherwise receive in this Sacrament.

At length your turn comes; you go in to the priest, and kneeling before him, make the sign of the cross and ask his blessing, *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Pray, father, give me your blessing, for I have sinned.* Then without stopping, say the first part of the Confiteor: *I confess to Almighty God, to Blessed Mary ever*

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Virgin, to Blessed Michael the Archangel, to Blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, to all the Saints in heaven, and to you, father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.

Having said this, you next tell the priest three things, first, *how long it is since you last went to confession;* secondly, *whether you received absolution;* and thirdly, *whether you said the penance* which the priest gave you. All this you will have thought of beforehand; so that if, for example, you had been at confession a month since, got absolution, and said your penance, you would be ready to say at once, after the words, "through my most grievous fault," *Father, I was at confession a month ago, received absolution, and said my penance.*

You now come to the actual confession of your sins, which you will also have prepared in your minds, so as to prevent any delay or loss of time. You will begin by saying, *Since my last confession, I accuse myself,* and here you will accuse yourselves of your sins, and the number of times that you have committed them, in as clear and distinct a manner as possible, for example, *Since my last confession, I accuse myself of wilful distractions at my prayers five times, of disobedience to my parents six times,* and so of the rest. You will find it most useful in confessing your sins to follow the order of the commandments, for it will greatly assist your memory, and prevent you from missing out anything of importance. Having accused yourself of all that you can think of since your last confession, it is well, if you are in the habit of going regularly to the Sacraments, to confess at the end some particular sin of your past life, or some class of sins which you are very sorry for, and have really tried to correct. You

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are thus more certain of receiving absolution with that real contrition of heart which is necessary for the Sacrament, but which is sometimes wanting in respect to our daily venial faults and imperfections. Thus, for example, when you had confessed all your fresh sins, you could say at the end, *Father, I wish to join to this confession such a sin of my past life,* [naming it] or, *all the sins that I have ever committed against holy purity,* or *of theft,* &c., naming whatever you think it best to mention. Having done this, finish your confession without any delay in the following form: *For these and all my other sins which I cannot at present call to mind, I am heartily sorry, purpose amendment, and beg pardon of God and penance and absolution from you, my ghostly father. Therefore, I beseech the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, Blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, all the Saints, and you, father, to pray to the Lord our God for me.*

Having now gone through your confession without stopping, except to answer any questions that the priest may put to you, you listen in turn to what *he* has to say, thinking no more about the number of your sins or whether you have forgotten anything. When your confessor gives you your penance say, *Yes, father,* to show that you understand and promise to do it. When he advises you how to overcome your faults, listen attentively, and try to remember what he tells you, so that you may put it in practice. As soon as he begins to absolve you or give you his blessing, say the "Act of Contrition" in a low voice, trying to think of what you are saying, and to be really sorry for your sins and determined to amend them. When the priest has finished speaking, make the sign of the cross, and go out of the confessional. Having returned to your place in church, again open

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your prayer book, and say with great fervour the prayers which you there find for "After Confession," along with any other prayers in the way of thanksgiving. Many also make a practice of saying their penance before they leave the church, and this is much to be recommended whenever it is possible, as it prevents all danger of its being afterwards forgotten. If, however, there is neither time nor opportunity for this, be sure to perform your penance as soon as possible, for example, on the same or the following day. It is well also before leaving the church to think over in your mind the advice which your confessor has given you, and to beg God's grace to put it in practice.

I have now, my dear children, explained to you carefully how to prepare for your confession, how to make it, and how to perform your thanksgiving afterwards. Follow these instructions faithfully, and make each confession as if it were to be the last of your lives. Were an Angel to come from heaven to tell you that you were to die in a few hours, but were to give you the opportunity of going to confession first, how careful would you be in preparing yourselves, how anxious not to miss out a single sin, how earnest in striving to obtain a true sorrow and to form a firm purpose of amendment! And after you had completed your preparation, how exact would you be in making your confession, how fervent in repeating your act of contrition, how faithful in fulfilling your penance! Now you can never tell but that the confession you are making may really be your very last; for you may die suddenly at any moment by an accident or a quick disease. And what a comfort will it be to you when you do come to die, whether your death be a slow or a speedy one, if you have then no reason to be anxious about your past confessions, but have always done your best to prepare for

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each and to make it as well, as if you knew it were the last that you would ever make! On the contrary, what could cause you to feel more wretched at the moment of death, than if, looking back at your past lives, you were to feel great reason to doubt whether your confessions were not null and void, or even sacrilegious, through your own gross neglect in preparing, your want of sincerity in accusing yourselves, or through the absence of a true sorrow and real purpose of amendment. Ah! my dear children, take the same pains with your confessions now, which you would wish to have done when you come to die. Thus will you ensure both a happy death and a joyful eternity.

We now come to speak of *Satisfaction*, which is the fourth and last remaining part of Penance. It is this that *completes the outward sign* of the Sacrament.

Q. What is Satisfaction?

A. It is doing the penance given us by the priest.

Yes, Satisfaction is *doing the penance given us by the priest;* for whenever we come to confession the priest imposes upon us a certain penance, for example, some prayers to be said, some fast to be performed, some alms to be given, or some other work of charity, mortification, or piety. This penance we are bound to perform exactly, nor can we change it of our own authority into any other which better suits our taste and convenience. In the first ages of the Church, the penances which were imposed for sin, especially for public crimes, used to be much more severe than they are at present, for the early Christians understood better than we do the malice of sin, and the necessity of appeasing Divine Justice. These penances used to consist of severe fasts, the wearing of sackcloth, exclusion from Church during Divine Office, &c.

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and they often lasted for years or even for a whole lifetime. They were called sometimes *public penances*, because they were performed in public, and sometimes *canonical penances*, because they were imposed not at the mere will of the confessor, but *according to the Canons*, which were rules established by the Church, prescribing the exact penalties to be imposed for particular crimes. Thus anyone who had done servile work on Sundays or Holidays, had to fast for three days on bread and water, and for ten days if he had been talking in church during the time of Divine service. Again, disrespect to parents was punished with a penance of three years' duration; but if a child had gone so far as to strike his father or mother, ten years' penance was enjoined. The grievous crime of adultery had also to be expiated by a penance of ten years; while those who had been guilty of homicide were obliged to do penance during their whole lives, and could only receive Holy Communion when at the point of death. During all this time, or at least for a considerable part of it, the penitent was excluded from the church during the celebration of the Divine Office, being stationed outside the door, where, clothed in sackcloth or other penitential garments, he cast himself at the feet of those who entered, begging that they would pray for him, so that he might obtain mercy from God. At length, by degrees, he was permitted to return to the Communion of the faithful, being allowed to enter the sacred building on condition of leaving again before the more solemn part of the Mass began, or afterwards, of remaining prostrate during the Holy Sacrifice. These severe penances continued in force till the sixth and seventh centuries, when they were gradually relaxed, owing to the decreasing fervour of the faithful. They were replaced by other penances of a lighter nature, which were proportioned by the

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confessor to the dispositions and ability of the penitent. My dear children, how little is it that we now do, compared with the early Christians, to atone for sin, which is as grievous as ever in the sight of God and equally deserving of his severe punishments!

ST. AMBROSE AND THEODOSIUS.

The Emperor Theodosius, having been induced by evil counsellors in the first moments of passion to sanction the massacre of an unarmed multitude in the city of Thessalonica, by way of punishing a sedition of the inhabitants, was warned by St. Ambrose of the necessity of expiating his crime by a severe penance before he could be readmitted to the communion of the faithful. Notwithstanding the Saint's warning, the Emperor, soon after he had made his entrance into the city of Milan, presented himself at the cathedral door in order to assist at the Holy Sacrifice. St. Ambrose, however, met him at the porch and forbade his entrance, bidding him remember that his hands were stained with blood, and that, though the master of an empire, he was in the eyes of God on a level with the meanest of his subjects, and equally accountable for his crimes to the Divine Justice. Theodosius, seeking to excuse himself by the example of King David, who had himself fallen into grievous sin, the holy bishop replied, "As you have imitated David in his sin, imitate him also in his repentance." Upon this the Emperor humbly accepted the penance which was imposed, and returning to his palace without entering the church, put off his royal robes, and clad in penitential garments, remained in solitude and mourning for the space of eight months. During this time he bitterly bewailed his crime, saying to his courtiers, "I weep and bewail my miserable condition; the church of God is open to beggars and slaves, but the church doors, and consequently, the gates of heaven are closed against me, for our Lord has said to his pastors, *Whatever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven.*"

At length the Emperor, unable any longer to bear the pain of his exclusion from the Sacred Mysteries, presented himself once more before the bishop, and besought him to shorten the time of his penance, and grant him the great grace of absolution. St. Ambrose then ordered him to place himself in the rank of the public penitents, which he did with great

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humility, kneeling among them at the church, and prostrating himself on the ground with many sighs and tears to implore the prayers of those who entered. He was then, after making a public confession of his crime, absolved by the Saint, and admitted once more to make his offering for the Holy Sacrifice, and partake of the Adorable Eucharist. His repentance, however, ended only with his life, for, as St. Ambrose himself tells us, the holy Emperor never passed a day without bewailing his grievous sin and imploring the Divine Mercy.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

Let us now suppose that your confessor has imposed upon you a penance in confession, for example, some prayers to be said, or some good work to be performed; *when* is it that you are bound to fulfil it? In this you must be guided by the direction of your confessor; if he has fixed the time for its fulfilment, for example, "to-day," "to-morrow," or "during next week," you must observe that time to the letter; but if he has not fixed a time, you may take it for granted that he intends you to say it *as soon as possible*, that is, without unnecessary delay. To put it off without good cause from day to day, would certainly be dangerous and to omit it altogether would be a grievous sin, if the sins you had confessed and for which it was given, were grievous. If however, you neglected your penance after confession, it would not prevent you from having received God's pardon, for that was granted at the time, according to the dispositions in which you then were, and the resolution which you then had of fulfilling exactly what the priest prescribed. Before concluding this point, I may remark that it is not well to speak to others of your penance, or indeed of anything that regards your confession, which should be a secret on *your* part, as it must of necessity be on the part of your confessor.

I am now going to explain to you a very important matter, namely, *why* it is that the priest gives you

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a penance in confession ; this will help you to understand better what we mean by an *indulgence*, which is the subject of the next question.

Remember then, my dear children, that when God forgives the *guilt* of a sin, he always at the same time forgives the *eternal punishment* due to that sin if it be grievous, but that he usually leaves some lesser punishment to be undergone by the sinner either in this world or in purgatory. A good father is wont to act in the same way when he forgives a child some serious fault. He pardons the crime, and does not inflict on his son the severe punishment which he has deserved ; but at the same time he usually (unless the child's grief is very great) lays on him a slight penance, partly as some atonement for his fault, and partly as a warning to be more careful for the future. Now it is to enable us to discharge this lesser punishment (called *temporal*, because it will end in time), and thus to pay at once the whole debt due to God's Justice, that the priest imposes a penance on us when we come to confession.

That you may understand this more clearly, call to mind the history of King David, who as you remember, fell into two most grievous sins, adultery and murder, for which the prophet Nathan was sent by Almighty God to reprove him. The words of the prophet went to the heart of David. Touched with Divine grace, he bitterly repented his past ingratitude to a God so deserving of his love, and from whom he had received so many favours, and he cried out in the deepest sentiments of contrition, " I have sinned." Thereupon the prophet informed him that in consideration of his sincere repentance, God had taken away his sin, but that nevertheless the child born from that guilty union should die. And so it came to pass.* A similar instance occurs in the later

* II. Kings xii.

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history of David, when a prophet was again sent by God to reprove him for his vanity in numbering his people, and though the prophet assured him that God had forgiven him the guilt of his sin on account of his contrition, yet he was warned that a severe temporal chastisement should fall upon him, and he was permitted to choose for himself one of these three scourges, war, famine, or pestilence.* From these two examples it is quite clear that when God forgives the *guilt* of our sins and the *eternal punishment* due to such of them as are mortal, he still leaves in most cases a *temporal punishment* to be undergone either in this world or in that which is to come.

Though it cannot be doubted that the penance given us in confession, inasmuch as it forms part of the Sacrament, is the most easy and perfect way of paying the debt of temporal punishment which we still owe to God, after we have received absolution, yet it is not by any means the *only* method of discharging it. The exact observance of the fasts of the Church, the voluntary penances which we impose on ourselves, the patient endurance of the sufferings and trials of life, are all different ways of making atonement to the Divine Justice, and acquitting ourselves of a debt which must be discharged to the last farthing, either in this life or in purgatory. Moreover, our Blessed Lord has in his Infinite Goodness provided us with another excellent and most easy means of satisfying the claims of his Justice, namely, *Indulgences*, of which we now come to speak.

Q. What is an Indulgence ?

A. An indulgence is a remission of the temporal punishment which often remains due to sin, after its guilt has been forgiven.

* II. Kings xxiv.

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Yes, *an indulgence is a remission or forgiveness of the temporal punishment due to sin after its guilt,* along with the eternal punishment which it deserves, *has been forgiven* by Almighty God in the tribunal of Penance. Do not forget this explanation, my dear children, for there is hardly any doctrine of our holy faith that is subject to more misrepresentation on the part of Protestants than that of indulgences, and this chiefly from their utter ignorance of the nature of an indulgence. Thus you will sometimes hear them say that an indulgence is *leave to commit sin,* at other times, that it is *the pardon of sin.* They may see, however, from this answer that it is neither the one nor the other, but that it is *the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin,* already pardoned by God. It is, therefore, a necessary condition for obtaining the effect of an indulgence that all our mortal sins should be first forgiven, and hence confession is one of the good works usually prescribed.

As to *the power of granting indulgences,* it was given by our Blessed Redeemer to his Church in the person of St. Peter, the chief of his Apostles and his own Vicar upon earth. This you believe like every other doctrine of faith on the authority of the Church, which Christ has appointed to teach you all truth. But can you tell me *when* it was that our Lord bestowed this power upon his Apostle? It was upon that occasion when in answer to the question of Jesus, *But whom do you say that I am?* St. Peter made that glorious profession of his faith, *Thou art Christ the Son of the Living God.* Whereupon our Lord said to him, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed*

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*also in heaven.** In these magnificent words our Blessed Lord bestowed on St. Peter a supreme authority over his Church—*the keys*, as he says, *of the kingdom of heaven*, which would enable him to open that happy abode to all the faithful committed to his charge. Furthermore, our Lord gave to the same Apostle universal power to remove every obstacle that might prevent the entrance of the soul into heaven, namely, *the power of binding and of loosing* not only from sin, but from all the punishment due to sin. *Whatsoever*, said he, *thou shalt bind upon earth it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth it shall be loosed also in heaven.* This power, my dear children, is exercised by the Vicar of Christ whenever he grants an indulgence, for thereby he releases us on certain conditions from the temporal punishment due to sin, which would otherwise as long as it remained undischarged, prevent us from entering into heaven.

The power of granting indulgences is, then, as old as the Church, having been bestowed upon her by Jesus Christ himself; it has also been exercised by the Popes, who are the successors of St. Peter from the very time of the Apostles. In those early ages it was customary, as I have already explained, for very severe penances, lasting for many weeks or years, to be imposed upon the faithful in punishment of scandalous crimes. Now we find that the Popes, or the Bishops, who derived their authority from him, used sometimes to grant an *indulgence* to the public penitents, excusing them, for example, a portion of their penance at the prayer of the martyrs who were being led to execution, and applying the sufferings of those same martyrs towards the full discharge of the debt which they owed to God. In later times similar

* Matt, xvi. 15—19.

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indulgences were granted on condition of the recital of certain prayers, the frequenting of the Sacraments, or the performance of other works of piety, mortification, or charity.

You will now be able to understand, my dear children, the meaning of certain expressions which must often have puzzled you when you have seen them in your prayer books, namely, an indulgence of seven years, of six weeks, of a hundred days, and the like. You, perhaps, thought that it meant that seven years, or six weeks, or a hundred days of purgatory, would be forgiven you on the performance of the good work named, but it does not mean anything of the kind, for we know nothing about the length of time that we shall be in purgatory, nor can we measure purgatory by years, or weeks, or days. What it means is, that as much of the temporal punishment due to our sins is remitted as would have been forgiven, by seven years, six weeks, or a hundred days, of the severe canonical penance of the early ages. The canonical penances are indeed no longer imposed, but the Church still continues to measure her indulgences by them.

You will also easily understand now, what is meant by *partial* and *plenary* indulgences. *Partial* indulgences are those which remit a portion only of the debt of temporal punishment which we owe to God, such, for example, as the indulgences of seven years, six weeks, &c., of which we have been speaking. *Plenary*, or *full* indulgences, on the contrary, are those which remit the whole of it; so that if we were to die immediately after gaining a plenary indulgence, we should go straight to heaven without passing through purgatory. These greater indulgences are granted at certain holy seasons of the year, also on special festivals, the conditions usually required to gain them being a good Confession and Communion, with prayers for the intention of the Pope.

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The greater part of the indulgences, granted by the Church, may be applied either to the benefit of our own souls or to the relief of the poor souls in purgatory. We cannot, however, apply the fruit of an indulgence to any one else who is living; for the Church, not wishing to encourage sloth among her children, does not intend her indulgences to benefit any, except those who perform in person the conditions required.

You have often heard of *indulgenced* beads, medals and crucifixes; indeed, you yourselves, very likely, possess some pious object that has been blessed and enriched with indulgences. If so, prize it very highly, and wear it with reverence and devotion, for we receive many graces by the devout use of these sacred objects, sometimes even when we little think of it. For example, if you keep about you a pair of rosary beads blessed by the Pope or by a priest who has power for the purpose, you gain an indulgence not only when you say the rosary, but when you hear Mass, prepare for Communion, recite the Angelus, pray for the dead, or perform many other works of piety or charity. The same indulgences may also be gained by those who wear medals or crucifixes blessed in like manner. Hence it is well at your morning prayers to form a general intention of gaining all the indulgences which you are able throughout the day, for there may be many of which you are ignorant, or might not think when you say the prayers or do the good works to which they are attached. Finally, never fail to bless and thank God for having left in his Church so abundant and easy a means of satisfying his Divine Justice, and securing for ourselves and others after death a speedy entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

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ST. ZEPHYRINUS AND NATALIS.

Eusebius, in his history of the Church, relates the circumstances of an indulgence granted at the commencement of the third century by the holy Pontiff, St. Zephyrinus, to a Bishop named Natalis, who had fallen into the grievous sin of apostacy. This unhappy man had at one time generously confessed the faith before the persecutors, and shared in the sufferings of the martyrs, but in an evil moment he had allowed himself to be seduced by the artifices of certain heretics, who sacrilegiously consecrated him Bishop of their sect. Almighty God, taking compassion on the unhappy man, strove to recall him to his duty by many heavenly visions, but as he continued obstinate in his error, being withheld from retracing his steps both by pride and interest, he mingled Justice with his Mercy, and sent his Angels to him during the night to scourge him severely, as they had done to Heliodorus of old in the temple of Jerusalem. Upon the following day Natalis covered himself with sackcloth and ashes, and shedding abundance of tears, went and threw himself at the feet of Zephyrinus, showing him the marks of the stripes which he had received, and imploring most earnestly that he might be received back into the communion of the faithful. In like manner he prostrated himself on the ground at the feet of the clergy and even of the laity, imploring their prayers, so that the whole assembly was moved with compassion. Whereupon St. Zephyrinus granted him *an indulgence*, relaxing the rigour of the penitential canons in his regard, in consideration of the stripes he had received and his sincere compunction, and readmitting him to the communion of the Church.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

TWELFTH INSTRUCTION.

Extreme Unction. Its Nature, Effects and Institution. Dispositions required. On Visiting the Sick and Dying.

The Infinite Goodness of God, which sanctifies us on our entrance into the world by Baptism, strengthens and enlightens us by Confirmation, nourishes

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us with the Holy Eucharist, and heals our spiritual infirmities by Penance, has provided us also with a special Sacrament to assist us in our passage out of this life, and prepare us for a happy eternity. This Sacrament is called *Extreme Unction*, or the *Last Anointing*, because in it we are for the last time anointed with Holy Oil, which is often used in the administration of the Sacraments. Let us now see in what Extreme Unction consists, and whether it contains those three conditions which are required to make a Sacrament, namely, an outward sign, an interior grace, and the Divine institution.

Q. What is Extreme Unction?

A. Extreme Unction is the anointing of the sick with holy oil, accompanied with prayer.

I. In this answer we are told what is the *outward sign* of Extreme Unction. It *is the anointing of the sick with holy oil, accompanied with prayer.* The anointing with oil is the *matter*, the accompanying prayer the *form* of the Sacrament; and as is the case in the other Sacraments, this matter and form, that is, the act performed and the words pronounced, constitute together the outward sign.

If ever, my dear children, you have been present when Extreme Unction has been given, you will have noticed that the priest applies the holy oil first to the eyes, and afterwards to the ears, the nose, the mouth, the hands and feet of the sick person. By these different anointings the grace of the Sacrament is directed to the purifying of the various senses, namely, the sight, the hearing, the smell, the taste and the touch, and to the perfect remission of all the sins committed thereby. For it is by the senses that we usually offend Almighty God, abusing to the injury of the Giver these excellent gifts which our

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Heavenly Father has given us to be employed in his service. In cases of sudden sickness, where there is not time for all the anointings to be made, one is probably sufficient, the accompanying words being so expressed as to apply the grace of the Sacrament to the other senses as well as the one which is anointed.

The Holy Oil which is used in Extreme Unction, is different from those which are employed in the other Sacraments, namely, the Oil of Catechumens and the Holy Chrism. It is called the Oil of the Sick, and is consecrated with the other Oils by the Bishop upon Maunday Thursday. It consists of the purest oil of olives, without the addition of any other substance. After each anointing, the oil should be respectfully wiped away from the place anointed with a piece of cotton, which is afterwards burnt.

The *form of words* used by the priest in anointing the various senses, consists in a prayer to our Blessed Lord for the perfect remission of those sins which have been committed by means of that particular sense. For example, when he anoints the eyes he says, "By this holy unction and his own most tender Mercy, may the Lord forgive thee whatever sins thou hast committed by the sight," and so of the rest. You see that the words used in Extreme Unction differ in form from those employed in the other Sacraments, "I baptise thee, I confirm thee, I absolve thee," &c. They contain a *petition* rather than a declaration, according to the words of the Apostle St. James, "Let them bring in the priests of the Church, and *let them pray over him.*"

Q. When is this Sacrament given?

A. When we are in danger of death by sickness.

From this answer you see that the Sacrament of Extreme Unction can be given only *when we are in*

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danger of death by sickness. Not only are those who are in health, or those afflicted with a trifling sickness, incapable of receiving it, but it cannot be given to those even who are in danger of death, as long as the danger arises from any other cause than that of sickness. Hence soldiers going to battle, criminals sentenced to death, sailors in a shipwreck, are not able to receive this Sacrament, which was instituted by our Lord especially for the refreshment, comfort and relief of those who suffer from the extremity of sickness. Moreover, we can receive Extreme Unction once only during the same dangerous illness; though if we recover so far as to be out of danger, yet not entirely restored to health, it can be administered again in case a fresh attack overtakes us.

Q. What are the effects of this Sacrament?

A. It comforts the soul in her last agony, it remits sin, and also restores health when God sees it to be expedient.

II. This question and answer, my dear children, treat of the second condition necessary to complete the Sacrament, namely, the *interior grace* conveyed by it, in other words, the effects which it produces in the devout receiver. These effects are chiefly three in number,

First, *It comforts the soul in her last agony.*

Secondly, *It remits sin, and*

Thirdly, *It also restores health when God sees it to be expedient.*

In the first place, Extreme Unction *comforts the soul in her last agony.* It is in that last terrible moment, when the body, weak and exhausted, feels the time of her dissolution at hand, and when the soul overwhelmed at the sight of her past sins, and beset with the violent temptations of the devil, is ready to sink into despair, it is then, surely, more

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than at any other time of our lives, that we stand in need of a special grace to arouse our hope, to strengthen our courage, and to fortify us in our last struggle with the enemy of our salvation. And this is what the Sacrament of Extreme Unction effects in the soul—it enables us to meet death with Christian courage, and a perfect conformity to the Divine Will.

Secondly, *It remits sin.* "If he," that is, the sick man, "be in sin," says the Apostle, "they shall be forgiven him." Notice that, ordinarily speaking, it is only *venial sin* that is forgiven by this Sacrament. For if we be in mortal sin, it is our duty to have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance in order to obtain pardon. It may, however, happen accidentally that even mortal sin may be forgiven by Extreme Unction. For example, if a person in mortal sin, and deprived of the use of speech, were anointed, his sin would, if he were truly contrite, be forgiven by the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. Such a case, however, can seldom happen, as the priest usually hears the confession of those whom he anoints if they are able to make it, and if not, he at least gives them absolution.

Besides actually forgiving the guilt of sin, the Sacrament of Extreme Unction possesses also the power of effacing *the remains of sin* from the soul. But what do we mean by the remains of sin? We mean those effects which are often left behind in the soul after the guilt of sin has been forgiven by the Sacrament of Penance, for example, the infirmity of the will, the evil inclinations of the heart. the despondency arising from the sight of our sins, the debt of temporal punishment, &c. Oh, how happy is that soul which is thus purified again and again in the Precious Blood of Jesus, before she goes to stand before the Judgment-seat of a God who is Holiness

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and Purity itself, and in whose presence nothing defiled can dwell!

In the third place, the Sacrament of Extreme Unction also *restores health when God sees it to be expedient*, that is, really to our advantage. For bodily health and a long life are not always real blessings; sometimes God foresees that a return of health would be the occasion of the loss of our souls, at any rate, that it would be no advantage to us, but the very contrary. Therefore, as our Heavenly Father, who loves us tenderly, gives *good* and not evil gifts to his children, he does not always heal our bodies, but strengthens and purifies our souls to prepare us for what is far better than a longer pilgrimage here below, namely, an endless life of happiness in heaven. Very often, however, Almighty God does actually by virtue of this Sacrament restore the body to health and strength, at least so far as to enable us to prepare better for death, and repair by the fruits of true repentance the sins and negligences of of our past lives.

These, my dear children, are the principal effects of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. As in all the other Sacraments, the grace which it imparts is of a twofold kind, namely, *sanctifying grace*, which purifies the soul and unites it more closely with God, and *sacramental grace*, which in Extreme Unction gives us a certain right to those special helps which we require to enable us to prepare for death, or, if it be for the good of our souls, to restore us to our bodily health.

Q. What authority is there in Scripture for the Sacrament of Extreme Unction?

A. In the 5th chapter of St. James it is said: "Is any man sick among you, let him bring in the priests of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall

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save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him."—*St. James* v. 14, 15.

III. Since we know by the infallible teaching of the Church of God, that Extreme Unction is one of the Seven Sacraments, it is plain that it must have been instituted by Jesus Christ, who alone, as the Son of God, has power to attach an interior grace to an outward or visible sign. The answer you have just repeated, shows how clearly it is proved from Holy Scripture that our Blessed Lord did indeed institute this Sacrament. The words are those of the Apostle St. James, who was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and was nearly related to our Blessed Lord. What St. James teaches us regarding this Sacrament, he had, of course, learnt, along with the other Apostles, from the lips of Jesus Christ, according to the words of our Lord, "Going teach ye all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you."

What is it then, that St. James teaches us to observe by the command of our Lord in respect to Extreme Unction? *If any man*, he says in his letter to all the faithful, *be sick among you, let him bring in the priests of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man; and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.* Here, my dear children, we are taught all that is essential regarding this Sacrament. First, that it is to be given only to the sick, *If any man be sick among you.* Secondly, that it is to be administered by the priests alone, and not by any of the lesser clergy, *Let him bring in the priests of the Church.* Thirdly, that prayer, the exact form of which is prescribed by the Church, should accompany the anointing, forming part of the

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outward sign, *Let them pray over him.* Fourthly, that the anointing of the sick man with oil must be joined to the prayer as a sensible sign of the healing effect of the Sacrament, *Anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord.* Finally, that certain wonderful effects shall be produced thereby, in both soul and body, *The prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up*, restoring to him his bodily health, if it be expedient. And not only that, but, *if he be in sins, they shall*, by virtue of the same holy Sacrament, *be forgiven him.* You see, my dear children, all that I have been teaching you about Extreme Unction is contained in this one sentence of the Apostle St. James.

In order to receive this Sacrament worthily, we should be in a state of grace, and should purify ourselves, if possible, beforehand by a good confession. We should also, in order to obtain the full fruit of it, prepare our souls by fervent acts of faith, hope, love and contrition, and also by a spirit of resignation to the Will of God. While the priest is reciting the prayers of the Church over us, we should earnestly implore the Divine blessing, and when he anoints our eyes, our ears, &c., we should make in our hearts sincere acts of sorrow, begging pardon of God for the manner in which we have abused those senses, and the many sins which we have committed thereby. We should also make an offering of the pains of our illness and of our death itself, if God requires it, as some little atonement to his Justice. By these fervent acts of humility, contrition, and resignation to the Divine Will, the graces conferred by Extreme Unction will be wonderfully increased and multiplied in the soul.

I need not tell you, my dear children, that to omit receiving in our last illness a Sacrament which affords so many and such powerful helps towards a good and

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holy death, would be a sinful neglect and a great ingratitude to God. It would also be wrong wilfully to put off receiving Extreme Unction from day to day, when our state has once been declared dangerous; for we should thereby expose ourselves to the risk of dying without it, or at least of receiving it at a time when our strength is so reduced and our minds are so enfeebled that we could not approach to this Sacrament with that spirit of recollection and those devout affections which would enable us to reap the full fruit of it. Foolish and ignorant people sometimes imagine that the Sacrament of Extreme Unction is like a sentence of death, and that when any one has received it, his state may well be despaired of. On the contrary, there is far more reason to hope for his recovery; for one of the principal effects of the Sacrament is to bless and assist the natural means taken for our bodily cure, whenever God sees that this is for our real good. Hence it follows that the sooner that this help is afforded us, before our state is quite beyond the reach of human remedies, the greater reason there is to hope for a happy result. If, on the contrary, it is God's Will that this sickness should be our last, the sooner that our souls are purified from sin, and fortified against the trials and temptations which beset us on the bed of death, the better will it be for us, and the greater security shall we have of a happy death and a joyful eternity.

As for *you*, my dear children, when serious illness overtakes you, earnestly desire to be strengthened, purified and consoled by the grace of Extreme Unction. Do your best to secure the same blessing for your fathers and mothers, your relations and friends, and all you whom may happen to be near in their last moments. Warn them affectionately of their danger as soon as you perceive it, and do not, through a foolish fear of alarming them, keep back from them

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the knowledge of their real state. Alas, how wicked and cruel are those false friends and unnatural children, who allow a sick person or parent to approach to the very gate of eternity blindfold, that is, without that knowledge of their danger which would enable them to set their affairs in order, and to make their peace with God! Do not be satisfied, however, with warning the sick person himself, take care that his confessor also is made acquainted with his danger, in order that, before it is too late, the dying man may, if necessary, be aroused by the words of his pastor, and both helped and encouraged to prepare to meet his God. Thus will you have the happiness of knowing that you have acquitted yourselves of a duty imposed upon you by filial piety, or at least by fraternal charity.

To visit and attend upon the sick, especially on those who are in danger of death, is one of the noblest and most meritorious works of mercy. Always esteem yourselves happy when you are able to exercise it, remembering that whatever affectionate care and patient attendance you devote to them is considered by our Lord as bestowed on himself in person, according to his own Divine Words at the last day: "I was sick and you visited me," for "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it unto me."* And indeed we read in the lives of some of the Saints, that when they had been lovingly and patiently attending on the sick and dying, our Blessed Lord rewarded them by appearing to them in the person of the sick man, showing them his wounded hands and feet, and looking on them with a smiling and gracious countenance. The sweet thought that Jesus Christ himself accepts our cares and attendance in the person of

* Matt. xxv. 36, 40.

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his disciples, will make us gentle and patient in bearing with those whims and humours which often arise from the ailments of the sick, and are a portion of their cross. From time to time, especially if the disease is painful or serious, we should suggest to the sufferer good and holy thoughts, reminding him of the Love of God, the torments of Jesus Christ, the shortness and vanity of earthly things, and the everlasting joys of Paradise. We should also repeat to him, now and then, so as not however to weary him, little pious ejaculations, such as "Oh, my God, I believe in thee, I hope in thee, I love thee with my whole heart. Teach me to love thee in time and eternity. Not my will, Lord, but thine be done. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, &c." These little aspirations should be said slowly and devoutly, so that the sick person may be able to recite them with us, at least interiorly. Such short ejaculations are generally better suited to the sick than long devotions out of the prayer book; for their minds, distracted by the pains of illness, cannot remain for any length of time applied to the same subject. When, however, they are able to bear it, we should do well to read them a short lesson out of a pious book, or to recite with them the Rosary, Litanies, or other prayers and sacred hymns with which they have been most familiar during life, and in which, therefore, they will most readily join.

As soon as the priest has fixed the day and hour for administering the last Sacraments to the sick person, you should prepare beforehand a little altar, on which he may place the Holy Eucharist and the Consecrated Oil. For this purpose cover a small table with a clean linen cloth, and place thereon a crucifix, two wax candles, a vessel of holy water, a small glass of common water, and the Communion cloth, adding, if possible, a few flowers by way of

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adornment. While the Sacraments are being administered, kneel by the bedside, and pray earnestly to God to bless and pardon the sick person, and if it is not his Will to restore him to health, to help him at least to make a good and a holy end. When the last moments approach, redouble your pious care; giving the dying man, from time to time, the crucifix to kiss, sprinkling the bed with holy water, and as long as he continues sensible, repeat slowly and devoutly in his hearing prayers such as I have already described, especially the holy names of "Jesus, Mary and Joseph." Ah, my dear children, how happy will you be when you come to die, if you have fulfilled faithfully, whenever opportunity offered, these last offices of charity to those who have gone before you!

I will now relate to you a beautiful story taken from the life of St. Elizabeth, of Hungary. It will show you how dear to our Blessed Lord are those who love to relieve and wait upon his sick and suffering members.

ST. ELIZABETH AND THE LEPER.

We read in the life of St. Elizabeth, the pious duchess of Thuringia, that it was her greatest delight to minister to the wants of the sick, whom she visited and waited on in person, relieving them and dressing their loathsome sores with her own hands. Those who were the most afflicted and abandoned, were often received by her into the castle of Wartbourg, where she dwelt with her husband Louis, so that their palace usually resembled a hospital on account of the number of sick whom it contained. The good duke was not, however, displeased at her charity, for he loved her dearly, and was gentle and compassionate like herself.

Now it happened one day, when Louis was absent from home on a journey to some other part of his dominions, that there came to the castle gate a poor leper named Elias, who was covered from head to foot with putrid sores. St. Elizabeth, seeing his sad condition, received him with the tenderest charity, washed his sores with her own hands, and

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anointed them with a healing balm; she then sought for some vacant room in which she might place him. Finding, however, that every spare chamber was already occupied with her patients, she conducted him to her own apartment, and placed him in the very bed in which she and her husband slept.

Meanwhile the duke unexpectedly returned, and was met at the castle gate by his mother, the duchess Sophia, who loudly complained to him of the folly of his saintly wife, who, she said, had placed a dirty filthy leper in his own bed. On hearing this, Louis could not help feeling for the moment some annoyance, and he followed his mother in silence to the chamber where the leper lay. Upon approaching the bed, and drawing aside the curtains, Almighty God opened, as the historian tells us, the eyes of his soul, and he saw before him, no longer the person of the leper Elias, but the figure of Jesus crucified. Overcome with awe, he threw himself on his knees, and tears of devotion flowed from his eyes, as he gazed upon the deathlike form, the crowned head, and the bleeding wounds of his crucified Lord. Then turning to Elizabeth he said, "I pray thee, my dear sister, give often my bed to such guests as these, and be not hindered in the exercise of thy charity." Then he added, "O Lord have mercy on me a poor sinner, and make me a man according to thy own heart."

Thus did our Lord show the saintly Elizabeth and her pious husband how those, who tend upon and relieve his sick, in very truth minister to his own person.—*Life of St. Elizabeth, of Hungary.*

EXTREME UNCTION AFTER DEATH.

St. Malachy, the holy Archbishop of Armagh, who lived in the twelfth century, being one day called to the house of a lady of quality who was dangerously ill, found her in such extremity that he determined to administer to her at once the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. Her friends, however, earnestly entreated him to defer doing so till the morning, "when," said they, "she will be better disposed to receive it." The Saint, though with great unwillingness, yielded to their request, and having made the sign of the cross over the sick woman, retired to his chamber for the night.

Meanwhile, the lady's sickness increased, and in a very short time St. Malachy was aroused by a general uproar throughout the house, and loud cries and lamentations. Upon inquiry he found that the lady had expired, whereupon

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he ran to her chamber, and lifting up his eyes and hands to heaven, exclaimed, "It is I myself who have sinned by this delay, and not this poor creature." Desiring earnestly to restore to the dead that of which he accused himself of robbing her through his own neglect, he continued standing over the corpse, and praying with many bitter sighs and tears. From time to time he turned to his companions, saying, "Watch and pray." Thus did he pass the whole night in tears and fervent prayers, reciting the whole Psalter or book of the Psalms. Almighty God did not fail to reward his faith and fervour, for at break of day the soul returned to the body of the deceased, and opening her eyes she saluted the holy Bishop with a devout bow. Thereupon he immediately anointed her, "knowing," says St. Bernard, who relates this history, "that by this Sacrament sins are remitted, and the prayer of faith saves the sick." From that moment the lady continued to recover, and she survived for some days until she had fully accomplished the penance imposed upon her by St. Malachy, at the end of which time she again sickened and died.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

THIRTEENTH INSTRUCTION.

Holy Order. The End of this Sacrament. The different Orders of Clergy. The Sacramental Orders of Bishop, Priest and Deacon. The Outward Sign of Holy Order. Its Interior Effects. Its Institution. The Ecclesiastical Orders of Subdeacon, Acolyte, Exorcist, Lector and Door-keeper. Dignity of the Christian Priesthood. Matrimony. Its Outward Sign. Its Interior Grace. Its Divine Institution. Indissolubility of Marriage. Dispositions necessary.

Q. What is Holy Order?

A. Holy Order is a Sacrament by which Bishops, Priests, and other Ministers of the Church are ordained; and receive power and grace to perform their sacred duties.

The five Sacraments which we have been so far speaking of, were instituted by our Blessed Lord, in

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order to bestow upon us, and to maintain and perfect in us the principle of Divine grace, by which our souls live in the sight of God. By them we are made members of Jesus Christ, and are preserved in constant union with him; moreover, the supernatural life which we thereby possess, becomes by means of the same Sacrament more and more perfect as we advance nearer to the eternal possession of God in the kingdom of heaven. Now it is the Will of God, my dear children, that this spiritual life, which the Sacraments impart and continually increase, should be conveyed to us by the hands of ministers, appointed by his Divine Son to be his representatives on earth, and the dispensers of his sacred mysteries. Hence he has instituted another Sacrament, namely, *Holy Order*, by which to set apart and sanctify for the sacred ministry those whom he has chosen to fulfil this sublime office. Formerly, among the Jews, under the Old Law, the sacred office of the priesthood descended from father to son in a particular family. All who were born of the race of Aaron enjoyed the dignity, and fulfilled in turn the duties of priests of the Most High; but in the Church of Christ it is not so, for the priests are chosen by God himself, without regard to race or family, and are set apart by a solemn consecration for the sacred duties of administering the Sacraments, offering up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, preaching the Word of God, and guiding and directing the faithful in all that regards the salvation of their souls. Hence it is that our Blessed Lord, in order to maintain in his Church a continual succession of sacred ministers until the end of time, has instituted the Sacrament of Holy Order, *by which*, as the Catechism says, *Bishops, Priests, and other Ministers of the Church are ordained, and receive power and grace to perform their sacred duties.*

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From these words you see, my dear children, that there are in the Church various ranks of sacred ministers, who, by means of this Sacrament, are endowed with the special powers and graces which they require for the discharge of their respective duties. The Catechism mentions especially *Bishops* and *Priests*, including the other ranks of the clergy, under the general term of *other ministers*. It is probable, however, that among these lower orders that of *Deacon* is the only one instituted by Jesus Christ in person, and that the remaining five, namely, the orders of *subdeacon*, *acolyte*, *exorcist*, *lector* and *door-keeper*, were established by the Church, in virtue of the general power, given to her by her Divine Spouse, to regulate all that regards his sacred worship. Hence it follows, since every Sacrament must be *ordained by Jesus Christ*, that only the three higher orders of *Bishop*, *Priest* and *Deacon* can be regarded in that light, while the other orders must be looked upon only as sacred rites or ceremonies, instituted by the Church for the purpose of conferring a certain power, and drawing down special graces on those to whom she entrusts the lesser functions of the sacred ministry. We must remember, moreover, that though the ordination of a Bishop, a Priest or a Deacon is in each case a sacramental act, yet that there are not three Sacraments of Holy Order but *one*, which imparts a greater or less share of the priestly power to those who receive it, according to the dignity of the order conferred. Thus to the deacon is given power only to preach and baptise, the principal and essential power of the priesthood, namely, that of offering sacrifice and forgiving sin, being reserved for the priest, and the fulness and perfection of it, that is, the power of confirming and ordaining, being imparted to those only who are raised to the higher dignity of Bishop. Thus has

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our Blessed Lord arranged the ranks of the sacred ministry in wonderful order (as the name of the Sacrament implies), communicating to one more and to another less of that Divine Priesthood, which he first exercised in his own Person, and which he still continues to discharge in the person of his ministers.

Let us now examine, my dear children, whether the three sacred orders of Bishop, Priest and Deacon, contain in themselves those essential conditions of an *outward sign*, an *interior grace*, and the *Divine institution*, which are necessary to constitute a Sacrament. Afterwards I will explain to you the use and origin of the five lower orders of the clergy, which have been established by the authority of the Church of God.

I. In the first place, then, what is the *outward sign* or ceremony to which is attached the inward grace of the Sacrament of Holy Order? It consists in *the imposition of the Bishop's hands and the accompanying prayer*, which shows forth the power and grace of the sacred office thereby conferred upon the candidate. The imposition of hands, which is the *matter* of the Sacrament, is common to all the orders, but the *form* of prayer differs in each, as to each belongs a different office, requiring a different kind and degree of grace. As a further expression of the particular grace which is conveyed, the sacred instruments suitable to each order are delivered to the newly ordained. Thus in ordaining a priest the Bishop places in his hands the chalice and paten, with the bread and wine for the Holy Sacrifice, declaring that he thereby gives him power to say Mass both for the living and the dead. This sacred ceremony has been instituted to show forth more clearly the grace and office of the Priesthood, and forms as it were part of the outward sign of the Sacrament, being required, at least by the command of the Church, to complete and perfect it.

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II. Let us now consider what is the *interior grace* of the Sacrament of Holy Order. This, my dear children, varies according to the order conferred. The increase of habitual or *sanctifying grace*, by which the soul is more and more united to God, is indeed common to the three higher orders, but the special *power* conveyed and the *sacramental grace* given to the newly ordained, to enable him to fulfil the sacred office entrusted to him, differ in each. Thus the Deacon receives power to assist the priest and sing the Gospel at High Mass—also to preach the Word of God, and, should occasion require, to administer solemn Baptism. At the same time there is bestowed upon him a certain sacramental grace, which is a right to the special helps that he will require for the faithful performance of these sacred duties. The power bestowed on the *Priest* is of course of a far higher order than that conferred upon the Deacon. To the Priest is committed the charge of consecrating the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and also that of forgiving and retaining sin in the Sacrament of Penance. To these powers may be added a commission to feed and nourish the flock of Christ with the Holy Sacraments and the Word of God. The *sacramental grace* conferred upon Priests in ordination corresponds to the dignity and importance of their various duties. Thus in their ordination they are filled with the Holy Spirit, who engages to assist and direct them in the discharge of their sublime office, and to support and sustain them in the arduous labours of their sacred ministry. It is this sacramental grace of Holy Order which enables the Priest to act in all things as a good and faithful shepherd of the flock of Christ, fearing neither hardship, nor poverty, nor pestilence, nor death itself, as long as he is engaged in the work of his Divine Master, namely, in feeding and guiding the sheep

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committed to his care, and seeking and bringing back the wanderer to the fold. Finally, in the solemn consecration of *Bishops* the fulness of the Priesthood—the power of confirming, and ordaining, and of consecrating sacred things—is bestowed upon the candidate, along with those special graces, which will enable him to fulfil worthily the duties of this sublime state.

III. We come now to speak of the *institution* of the Sacrament of Holy Order. This, my dear children, took place at the Last Supper, when, after changing the bread and wine which lay before him into his Body and Blood, our Blessed Lord gave his Apostles power to do the same—in other words, to offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to the end of time. "Do this," said he, that is to say, what I myself have just done, "for a commemoration of me."* To this essential power of the Priesthood, namely, that of *offering sacrifice*, he added after his Resurrection the power of forgiving and retaining sin: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."† But the Apostles, my dear children, were not to be Priests only, they were to be also *Bishops*, that is, rulers or overlookers of the flock of Christ—of the Priests themselves as well as of the simple faithful. Therefore our Blessed Lord gave to them other powers also, more ample than those which he attached to the office of the Priesthood. These are distinctly mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, where we find the Apostles, as Bishops of the infant Church, confirming the newly baptised converts, and ordaining with the imposition of hands fresh ministers, both Priests and Bishops, to offer sacrifice, to administer the Sacraments, and to carry on the

* Luke xxii. 19. † John xx. 22, 23.

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great works of preaching and converting mankind.* Hence it is clear that the Apostles must have received these additional powers from our Lord himself with a commission to hand them down to those who should succeed them in the important office of ruling the Church of God.

We come now to speak of the institution of the third order of clergy, namely, that of *Deacons*, the history of which is related as follows by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles.

ORDINATION OF THE SEVEN DEACONS.

"In those days the number of the disciples increasing, there arose a murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews, for that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve calling together the multitude of the disciples, said, *It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*

"And the saying was liked by all the multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the Apostles; and they, praying, imposed hands upon them."—*Acts* vi. 1—6.

From this history, my dear children, we see that the necessity, which the Apostles were under, of securing some assistance in the daily distribution of alms to the people, was the immediate occasion of the ordination of the seven deacons. Do not, however, think that their office extended merely to the management of the temporal affairs of the infant Church. So far was this from being the case, that we find them immediately associated with the Apostles in preaching the Word

* See Acts viii. 17, xix. 6, vi. 6, xiii. 3, xiv. 22.

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of God, explaining the Sacred Writings, and administering the Sacrament of Baptism to the converts whom they made. It is clear, therefore, that a certain spiritual power and grace was conferred upon them by the imposition of the Apostles' hands, and since we know that the Apostles had no power of themselves to attach an interior grace to a mere outward sign, it is equally clear that they must have been instructed by our Lord himself as to the nature of the office of Deacon and the manner of ordaining them. Hence it is, that the ordination of Deacons may justly be regarded in the light of a sacrament, no less than the conferring of the higher orders of Priest and Bishop.

You will wonder, perhaps, why in speaking to you of these sacred orders, I have said nothing about the office of *Archbishop*, or the dignity of *Patriarch*, of which you may have heard. The reason is, because these are not distinct orders of clergy, but only different ranks of Bishops, possessing a greater or a less degree of *jurisdiction* in the Church. But I must explain to you what is meant by *jurisdiction*, the nature of which it is very useful to understand. Let us take an example. After a priest is ordained he is appointed by the Bishop to a mission—in other words he receives from him the charge of a certain congregation, to whom he is commissioned to preach, and administer the sacraments. This charge of souls is called *jurisdiction;* it is something quite distinct from the power which that priest received in the Sacrament of Holy Order. In his ordination he received, indeed, power to say Mass, to forgive sins, and to preach the Word of God; but he had no one to whom to preach, no one whose Confession he was permitted to hear, until the Bishop gave him *jurisdiction*, by authorising him to use this power within his diocese. For the Bishop has jurisdiction, or charge over the whole diocese, which he in turn has received from the Pope,

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who is the fountain head or source of all jurisdiction, since he has received from our Blessed Lord the charge of the universal Church. Now there are some Bishops, my dear children, who possess not only jurisdiction over their own dioceses, but a certain degree of authority over the Bishops of other dioceses, and these are called *Archbishops*, that is to say, chief or principal Bishops. For example, in England there are thirteen dioceses, which form one province, called the Province of Westminster, but among the Bishops who rule these thirteen dioceses, there is only one who is an Archbishop, namely, the Right Reverend EDWARD MANNING, Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster. He, in virtue of his office, exercises a certain authority throughout the whole province of Westminster, for example, he possesses the power of summoning the Bishops to Provincial Councils, of presiding over them in their assemblies, &c. This form of Church government by Archbishop and Bishops is commonly called the *Hierarchy*, or sacred rule. It is the ordinary form of government in the Church, and was restored in England by our Holy Father Pope Pius IX. in the year 1850, after it had been interrupted for three centuries, during which, in consequence of the cruel persecution, the Catholics of this country were governed by Bishops of foreign sees, bearing the title of Vicars Apostolic.

The title of *Patriarch* represents a still wider jurisdiction than that of Archbishop, the Bishops of many provinces being formerly subject to them. They do not, however, differ as regards their sacred order from other Bishops.

As to the title of *Cardinal*, it has nothing to do with the care of souls, but is a dignity bestowed by the Pope on those whom he wishes to distinguish as his principal assistants and advisers. The Cardinals are in fact the Princes of the Church, but, though

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they are usually Bishops or Priests, their office is not in itself connected with the Sacrament of Holy Order.

Besides the three orders of Bishop, Priest and Deacon, which are raised to the dignity of a Sacrament, there are, as I told you, five lower ranks of clergy which were instituted by the Church for the discharge of certain inferior offices in the Sanctuary, and which serve as steps by which to ascend to the sublime dignity of the Priesthood. We will now see what they are, and what are the duties belonging to them.

The highest of these orders is that of the *Subdeacon* who, as his name implies, is immediately *under the Deacon*, being appointed to assist him in ministering to the Priest at the Holy Sacrifice. Thus it is the duty of the Subdeacon to bring and remove the chalice at High Mass, also to sing the Epistle, incense the people, and perform various other offices about the altar. The Subdeacon incurs at his ordination the obligation of perpetual chastity, and is also bound from that time to the daily recital of the Divine Office. On account of the important duties assigned to the Subdeacon in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, his office is considered as one of the *Sacred* or *Higher Orders;* but it is most probable that it does not possess the character of a Sacrament.

The four remaining orders which rank below that of Subdeacon, are usually called the *Minor* or *Lesser Orders*. The origin of these dates from the times of persecution in the early Church, and though the duties assigned to these orders are now mostly extinct, or usually performed by laics, the Church still retains them in order to recall to our minds the history of her early trials, and also to show forth the dignity and duties of the Christian Priesthood, for which these lesser orders serve as a course of preparation.

Highest among them is the order of *Acolyte*. The

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meaning of the word Acolyte is *Follower*, and he is so called because in the early Church the Acolytes were the immediate followers or attendants of the Bishops. They carried his messages, bore in their arms the offerings of bread and wine for the Holy Sacrifice, and assisted the Deacon and Subdeacon when ministering at the altar. Their duties are now chiefly confined to the presenting of the cruets, the ringing of the altar bell, and the bearing of lighted candles at solemn Mass.

Next in dignity is the order of *Exorcists*. In the early ages of the Church bodily possession by Satan was very frequent, especially among pagans. To show her contempt for the powers of hell, the Church committed the charge of driving out devils to her inferior ministers, instituting the order of *Exorcists* for the special purpose. Since the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, the power of the devil as regards bodily possession has been much restricted, and the duty of exorcising has been reserved by the Church to her Priests and Bishops. The order of Exorcists is still, however, preserved among the Lesser Orders as a preparation for the Priesthood, and a remembrance of past ages.

Below the order of Exorcists is placed that of *Lectors*. Their duty, as their name indicates, was to chant or read the sacred Lessons at Divine Office, and this they are still empowered to do in virtue of their ordination. Formerly, however, their duties were considerably more extended. To them was committed the charge of the Sacred Books, to guard them from the persecutors. Frequently, too, they acted as secretaries to the Bishops, or studied under their direction, with the view of qualifying themselves for the duties of the Priesthood.

The lowest step in the ranks of the Clergy is the order of *Door-keepers*. Their duties were formerly

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of great importance, especially in times of persecution, when infidels or false brethren often sought admittance into the assemblies of the faithful, in order to betray the Christians into the hands of the persecutors. Besides the duties of guarding the doors of the church, and presiding over the admittance of the congregation, the Door-keepers were also charged with the general care of the church, which they had to open and shut at the proper hours, and to preserve in a decent and orderly state for Divine worship. They had also to sound the bell for the various sacred offices, and to direct the faithful to the places assigned to them, placing the men on one side and the women on the other, as was customary in the early and even in the middle ages. Thus you see that the Door-keepers fulfilled in the early Church the duties both of Beadles and Sacristans, which offices are usually at the present day discharged by laymen not invested with any sacred character.

Such, my dear children, are the different orders of Clergy in the Church of God, which, like the nine choirs of Angels, who minister about God's throne in the heavenly courts, are gathered within the sanctuary around the Sacred Tabernacle, which is the dwelling-place on earth of the Incarnate God.

It only remains now to speak of the *tonsure*, which is not, however, a separate order, but is a *preparation* for Holy Orders. It consists in the shaving of a portion of the hair of the head, by which the candidate for Sacred Orders expresses his renunciation of the world, and his choice of God as his portion and inheritance. The ceremony of the tonsure admits the candidate into the ranks of the clergy, and entitles him to wear the garb and share in the privileges of that holy state.

When we consider the exalted office and the sublime power entrusted by Jesus Christ to his ministers

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upon earth, and especially to his Priests and Bishops, we are struck with amazement, and cannot fail to be penetrated with the deepest reverence for their sacred office. They are the representatives of Jesus Christ here below; in them he still lives among us, speaking to us through their lips the words of eternal life. Hence the Priest, when he consecrates the Body and Blood of Christ in the holy Mass, does not say, "This is the Body of Jesus Christ," but "This is my body," because he speaks not as man, but as the representative of Jesus Christ, who by *his* hand offers to the Heavenly Father the sacrifice of himself. And so also in the Holy Sacrament of Penance the Priest says not to the penitent, "Jesus Christ absolve thee," but "I absolve thee from thy sins," because he does not speak in his own name, but in the Name of Jesus Christ, who by the mouth of his minister, pronounces the words of pardon over the penitent sinner. Ah, my dear children, with what holy awe and profound reverence should we not regard the office of the Priest! What respect too should we not show in our conduct towards him, remembering the words of St. Paul, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."* The lips of the Priest have power to call down the Son of God upon the altar, and to open the gates of heaven to the penitent sinner. His hands are daily sanctified by the touch of the most pure and spotless Body of Jesus, which he holds, and raises aloft, and carries in Communion to the faithful, having a privilege like to that of Mary herself, to whom it was given to nurse and carry the Divine Infant in her arms. His tongue utters to us the messages of God, and interprets his Divine commandments. It speaks to us, on the

* I. Cor. iv. 1.

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part of God, words of consolation, encouragement, counsel, direction and reproof, and it continually pleads for us by the recital of the Canonical Hours at the Throne of Grace. Truly is the office of the Priest an Angelic office, or rather it is an office far higher than that of the Angels, who are but the ministers of God to do his will;* whereas, the Priest is not only his minister, but his representative upon earth, and a mediator between him and his people. Hence St. Francis, of Assisium, was wont to say, "Were I to meet in the street an Angel and a Priest, I would first bow my knee in reverence to the Priest, and afterwards in reverence to the Angel." And you also, my dear children, when you respectfully bow your head or raise your cap to salute the Priest, or kneel to receive his blessing, show thereby that the same faith which animated the Saints, burns also within your own breasts. For why do you do so, but because you see with the eyes of your soul Jesus Christ himself in the person of his Priest, and know and feel that though he may be poor and lowly in the eyes of unbelieving men, his sacred character raises him in dignity and honour far above all the kings and princes of the earth?

THE EMPEROR AND THE PRIEST.

St. Martin, the illustrious Bishop of Tours, being on a visit, upon certain business, at the Court of the Emperor Maximus, was invited with the priest who accompanied him to sit down to dinner at the Emperor's table. During the repast a cup of wine was poured out and presented to Maximus, who wishing to do honour to the holy Bishop, ordered it to be first handed to him, expecting that when he had tasted, he would return it to him again. To his surprise, however, and that of the whole Court, St. Martin, after he had drunk, passed the cup to his companion the priest, as being the most exalted person in the assembly. So far from being displeased, Maximus

* Ps. cii. 21.

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applauded this action of the saint, acknowledging that in the sight of God, who estimates things at their true value, the imperial is far inferior to the priestly dignity.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

THE BISHOP TURNED HERMIT.

It is related in the life of St. John, surnamed "the silent," Bishop of one of the cities of Armenia, that desiring to serve God with greater perfection, he left his See and travelled into the deserts of Palestine, where there was at that time a celebrated laura, or community of solitaries, presided over by the Abbot St. Sabas. Here it was that St. John directed his steps, and presenting himself to St. Sabas, he earnestly implored him to receive him among the number of his disciples. St. Sabas at first employed the stranger in low and menial offices, such as fetching water, carrying stones, and serving the community in the kitchen, but soon recognising his extraordinary sanctity, he assigned him a cell in which he dwelt in profound silence for three years, practising the most severe austerities.

The holy and mortified life of the new hermit, and the piety which he evinced at the Divine Office and the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries, filled every one with admiration, and induced St. Sabas to recommend him for the sacred order of the priesthood. He accordingly took him to St. Elias, at that time Patriarch of Jerusalem, and implored him to impose hands upon him, and ordain him priest. St. John, knowing that having already received that order, it could not be repeated without sacrilege, requested a private interview with the Patriarch, in which, under a promise of strict secrecy, he informed him that he was a Bishop, but had left his See in order to do penance for his sins. Thereupon St. Elias taking the Abbot Sabas aside, told him that his disciple had disclosed certain things to him, which prevented him from ordaining him. He recommended him to take him back to his cell, and to allow him to remain in peace.

St. Sabas thereupon returned home in great affliction, fearing that the disciple whom he thought so holy, had been guilty of some secret crime. In his trouble of mind he had recourse, according to his custom, to Almighty God, spending the whole night in prayer and earnestly imploring him to make known to him the cause of the Patriarch's refusal. Upon this an Angel appeared to him, and told him that his disciple was indeed a vessel of election, but that being already a Bishop, he could not be ordained a Priest. St. Sabas hearing this was extremely comforted, and going to St. John's cell, gently

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reproached him with concealing his sacred character, telling him that God himself had revealed it to him. St. John was much confused at finding his secret discovered, but St. Sabas consoled him and bade him remain in peace, promising never to make it known to others.—*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

We now come to speak of the last of the seven Sacraments, which is *Matrimony*. Tell me, then,

Q. What is Matrimony?

A. Matrimony is a Sacrament by which the contract of marriage is blessed and sanctified.

Yes, *Matrimony* is that Sacrament by which the *contract of marriage*, in other words, the mutual agreement of man and wife on entering the married state, receives the *blessing* of God and is *sanctified* or made holy. The state of marriage was, indeed, a good and holy state from the beginning of the world, for it was instituted by God himself in the garden of Paradise. No sooner had he created Adam, the first man, than he created also Eve to be his partner and helpmate throughout life, and blessed their union with each other. It was not, however, till the coming of Jesus Christ upon earth, that marriage was raised to the dignity of a Sacrament, becoming thereby a means of grace to those who enter into it with proper dispositions. Thus has our Blessed Lord provided for the bringing into the world, and the training up in virtue and piety, of fresh members of his Church to fill up the number of his elect, that is, of those who are called and chosen to occupy the thrones of the fallen Angels.

Q. What grace does this Sacrament give to those who receive it worthily?

A. It enables them to bear the difficulties of their state, to love and be faithful to one another, and to bring up their children in the fear of God.

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This question and answer treat of the *inward grace* of the Sacrament of Matrimony, but first let us speak of the *outward sign*, which is the first condition necessary to constitute a Sacrament.

I. What then, my dear children, is the *outward sign* of Matrimony? It is that mutual consent, which is given by both man and woman, to live together in holy union with one another until death shall part them, which consent must be expressed *externally*, for example, by pronouncing a certain form of words. If ever you have seen two persons standing at the altar to be married you will have noticed that, at one particular part of the ceremony, the man and woman join their hands, the man saying at the same time that he takes the woman to be his wedded wife. After this they separate their hands, and then again join them, the woman this time saying that she takes the man to be her wedded husband. This mutual agreement thus expressed, both by act and word, is the *outward sign* of the Sacrament. Then follows the blessing of the Church upon the union thus solemnly entered into by the contracting parties.

II. As to the *inward grace* of the Sacrament, which is signified and produced by this outward sign, it is sufficiently explained in the answer you have just repeated, namely, that this Sacrament enables those who receive it worthily *to bear the difficulties of their state* which are often very great and trying, *to love and be faithful to one another*, and, what is of the greatest importance, *to bring up their children in the* love and *fear of God*. Thus you see that our Blessed Lord has provided in this Sacrament an abundant source of grace, from which those who enter into the married state with good dispositions and in obedience to the laws of the Church, may continually derive the various helps, which they stand in need of, to enable them to discharge the important duties of their holy

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state. The right which they acquire by the worthy reception of this Sacrament to these special helps, is the *sacramental grace* of Matrimony, which at the same time, like all the other Sacraments, unites the worthy receiver more closely to God by the increase of *sanctifying grace*, which it likewise bestows.

III. In the third place, the Sacrament of Matrimony was ordained by *Jesus Christ*. That our Blessed Lord did really institute it as a means of grace, there can be no manner of doubt from the way in which it is spoken of by the Apostle St. Paul; but on what particular occasion this took place is not related in the Holy Scripture. The Evangelist St. John tells us that on one occasion our Lord was himself present at a marriage feast along with his Blessed Mother, namely, at Cana in Galilee, where he worked his first miracle by changing water into wine. No doubt our Lord on that occasion, if he did not actually institute the Sacrament, added additional sanctity to this holy state by his sacred presence. The Apostle St. Paul, who received his teaching directly from Jesus Christ, compares the union of man and wife, lawfully joined together by the bond of marriage, to the union of Christ and his Church, than which union nothing more intimate or more holy can be imagined. "For which cause," he says, "shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh." And he adds these remarkable words, "*This is a great Sacrament*, but I speak in Christ and his Church."* From these words it is clear that St. Paul regarded the union of man and wife in Matrimony as a sacred sign of that holy union which subsists between Christ and his Church, and as a source of grace to those who enter into it with

* Eph. iv. 22—33.

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worthy dispositions, in other words as one of the seven Sacraments.

Q. Can any human power dissolve the bond of marriage?

A. No: for Christ has said, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."—*Matt.* xix. 6.

From this question and answer we learn that no human power can dissolve the bond of marriage, *What God hath joined together*, says our Blessed Lord, *let no man put asunder*. And in another place our Lord plainly declares that "Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if the wife shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery."*

From this it is clear that neither human laws, nor human judgments, such as the decisions of the so-called Divorce Court, unhappily established in this country, have any power to destroy what God has established, or to break asunder the holy union which exists between man and wife. Death alone can separate them, and set the survivor free to lead a single or religious life, or to enter into a fresh contract of marriage.

In order to receive the holy Sacrament of Matrimony *worthily*, it is necessary, my dear children, to be in a state of grace, and to follow faithfully the regulations which the Church has laid down on this subject. Thus for example, those who wish to enter into the married state, must be careful to satisfy themselves that no hindrance exists to their marriage, such as the ties of relationship within certain degrees which would render the marriage null and void, or the obligation of a previous promise, or a difference

* Mark x. 11, 12.

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of religion, either of which obstacles would render marriage sinful. Finally, they should earnestly implore the blessing of God upon their marriage, purifying themselves from all grievous sin by a good Confession, and they should assist at the marriage ceremony with fervour and piety, remembering that it is not a mere outward form, but "a great Sacrament," instituted by our Lord to convey the most precious graces to the soul of the devout receiver.

The following beautiful history taken from the book of Tobias, conveys a useful lesson as to the dispositions with which those, who are about to enter into the married state, should approach to this holy Sacrament.

THE MARRIAGE OF TOBIAS AND SARA.

Having arrived at the house of Raguel, the young Tobias, following the instructions of the Angel, before he sat down to eat, asked of his host the hand of his daughter Sara in marriage. The request was granted and the marriage ceremony was celebrated with great rejoicing but not without inward fear on the part of Raguel, for the devil had already slain seven youths, who had sought the hand of Sara, on the first night of their nuptials. But this, as the Angel assured Tobias, was permitted as a punishment for the unworthy and carnal dispositions with which they had entered the holy state of marriage.

"And after they had supped," says the Holy Scripture, "they brought in the young man to her. Then Tobias exhorted the virgin and said to her, *Sara arise, and let us pray to God to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day. For we are the children of the Saints, and must not be joined together like heathens that know not God.* So they both arose, and prayed earnestly both together.

"And it came to pass about the cock-crowing, Raguel ordered his servants to be called for, and they went with him together to dig a grave. For he said, *Lest, perhaps, it may have happened to him in like manner as it did to the other seven husbands.* And when they had prepared the pit, Raguel went back to his wife, and said to her, *Send me of thy maids, and let her see if he be dead, that I may bury him before it be*

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day. So she sent one of her maid servants, who went into the chamber and found them safe and sound. And returning, she brought the good news, and Raguel and Anna his wife blessed the Lord. And immediately Raguel commanded his servants to fill up the pit which they had made, before it was day.—*Tobias* vii., viii.

FIRST INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE.

"Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam, and when he was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it. And the Lord God built the rib which he took from Adam into a woman, and brought her to Adam. And Adam said, *This now is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman because she is taken out of man.* Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh."—*Genesis* ii. 21—24.

FOURTEENTH INSTRUCTION.

CHAPTER VII.—*Of Virtue and Vices. The Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity.*

The chapter of the Catechism which we are beginning to-day, and which treats *of Virtues and Vices*, is closely connected with that which explains the Ten Commandments. To avoid evil and to do good, is the lesson we learn from the Divine Commandments; in this chapter we are taught what habits we must form in order to do the good which God enjoins, and what evil dispositions we must root out of our souls so as to avoid the sins which are forbidden by the Commandments. We speak, therefore, in this chapter of good habits and bad habits, in other words, *of virtues and vices.* There are also some other useful lessons added, the knowledge of which will enable us better to practice virtue and to keep from sin.

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Q. How many Theological Virtues are there?

A. Three: Faith, Hope, and Charity.

The first virtues which are here spoken of are the three *Theological Virtues*, namely, *Faith*, *Hope*, *and Charity*. They are placed first, because they are the highest and noblest of the virtues, and contain in fact a short summary of all the duty which we owe to God. You have already learnt a good deal about these three virtues. In the very first chapter of the Catechism you were taught, that in order to save your souls, you must *worship God by Faith, Hope, and Charity*, in other words that you must *believe in him, hope in him, and love him with your whole hearts*. When we came to speak of the first commandment, these three duties were more fully explained; and you were taught that it is not sufficient to have the habits of Faith, Hope, and Charity abiding in the soul, but that we must exercise these virtues by frequent acts. And, finally, when I explained to you the wonderful effects of the Sacrament of Baptism, I told you that at the moment of Baptism the habits of these three virtues are infused into the soul, in other words, that we then receive a supernatural power of believing in God, hoping in him, and loving him—things which we are unable to do by the mere strength of our human nature. If you remember what you have already learnt, you will be able to understand pretty well the meaning of the answers in to-day's lesson. But first let us see what is the meaning of that hard word *Theological* which we have never before met with, and why it is always applied to the three virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, and to no others.

Q. Why are they called Theological?

A. Because they relate immediately to God.

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Yes, my dear children, it is *because they relate immediately*, or directly, *to God*, that these virtues are called Theological. For the term *Theological* is made up of two words from the Greek language, which mean *God* and a *word;* so that *Theology* means a word or discourse about God, and *Theological*, that which speaks of God or relates to him. All the supernatural virtues, indeed, relate to God, but these three relate to him *immediately* or directly, whereas, the other virtues relate directly to God's creatures, and indirectly to God himself, for whose love we exercise them. I will show you what I mean by an example. Take *obedience*, which is the submission of our will to that of our superiors for God's sake. You see that the virtue of obedience relates first or directly to our superiors, and secondly or indirectly to God—it is our superiors whom we obey, but the reason why we obey them is because they hold in our regard the place of God. Again, take *almsgiving*. To whom do you give alms? To the poor. Therefore this virtue relates to the poor first, but through them to God, because you relieve the poor for his love. But when you believe in God, hope in him, or love him, in other words, when you exercise Faith, Hope or Charity, your act begins with God and ends with him. What do you believe? The word of God. And why? Because it is God who speaks, and he is Truth itself. What do you hope for? God's grace and the possession of God hereafter. And why? Because God is able, and willing, and has promised to grant it. What do you love? God Himself. And why? Because he is the Supreme Good, and is infinitely worthy of your love. You see that God is both the direct object and motive of the three Theological virtues, whereas, he is not the immediate object of the other virtues, though he is the *motive* for which we practise them.

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Hence we may conclude that the three Theological virtues are far more noble and exalted than all the others, since they alone relate directly to God, and every other virtue must spring from and be directed by them, to be of any value whatever in God's sight.

Q. What does Faith enable us to do?

A. It enables us to believe, without doubting, all that God has taught and the Church proposes.

Yes, Faith is that supernatural gift of God, which we possess habitually by the grace of our Baptism, and which *enables us to believe, without doubting, all that God has taught and the Church proposes.*

In explaining to you formerly the nature of Faith, I told you that *to believe* is "to receive a thing as true upon the word of another."* If you believe it to be true because *man* tells it you, it is a mere human faith, but if you believe it on the word of *God*, it is Divine Faith, which is the first of the three Theological virtues, and the foundation of the other two. This Divine Faith excludes all doubt or hesitation; it commands the entire submission of the understanding to the Divine teaching, for though man might deceive us, God cannot—God, who knows all things, and who is Holiness, Goodness, and Truth itself.

But how is it that we are to know what God teaches, for we cannot see God or hear him speak? It is by the voice of the Catholic Church, which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has appointed to teach us all those things which he has revealed. "Go," said he to his Apostles, who were the first pastors of the Church, "and teach all nations—and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of

* Vol. I. p. 13.

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the world."* Jesus Christ, therefore, ever abides with his Church, teaching it by his Holy Spirit all truth, and preserving it from all error, according to his promise that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.† Hence we are bound to receive at once whatever the Church proposes to our belief, as the infallible word of God himself. But how, you will ask, does the Church speak to us? By the voice of her pastors, whether it be that of the Bishops assembled together in solemn council with the Pope at their head, or of the Sovereign Pontiff himself, teaching us as the Supreme Pastor of the faithful in the name of the Church. For *he* is the Head of the Church and the Vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth, being the successor of St. Peter, to whom our Lord committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and on whom he built his Church, as upon a most firm and unshaken rock. Hence the Pope speaks to us with the voice of St. Peter, nay even with the voice of Jesus Christ himself. Whatever, therefore, he solemnly proposes to our belief in regard to faith or morals, *that* we are bound to receive at once as the teaching of the Church and the teaching of our Blessed Lord.

As to the manner in which we are to exercise the virtue of Faith and the sins opposed to it, there is no need to say anything here, as I have already taught you that when I was explaining the first Commandment. I will only remind you of one thing which I then said, namely, that the habit of Faith is one of those precious talents or gifts of God for which you can never be too grateful, but of which he will demand an account at the day of Judgment, not only if you have abused and wasted it, but also if you have buried it in the ground by neglecting to

* Matt. xxviii, 19, 20. † Matt. xvi. 18.

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multiply it by frequent acts and to make it the rule of your daily lives.

HEROIC FAITH OF A CHILD.

In the year 1833, a cruel persecution was raised by the tyrant Minh-Menh, king of Tong-Quin and Cochin China, against the Christians of his dominions, and vast numbers of them were cruelly tortured and put to death for the faith. The Christians exhibited the most heroic constancy; even the very children nobly confessed the faith, and offered themselves to the judges to receive the crown of martyrdom.

It happened one day that a little boy of ten years old presented himself at the tribunal. Throwing himself on his knees before the judge, he joined his hands, and asked permission to speak. "Mandarin," said he, "give me a cut with a sabre that I may go to my own country." "Where is your country?" said the judge. "It is in heaven," replied the child. "And where are your parents?" "They are gone to heaven, and I want to follow them. Give me a stroke with the sabre and send me there." The mandarin was struck with admiration at the faith and courage of the child, but refused to grant his request. We may well believe that in after years this generous confessor of the faith took his place among that noble band of martyrs, who have since watered the soil of Tong-Quin with a continuous stream of blood.—*Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.*

NOBLE SAYING OF THE KING OF BUNGO.

Divine Faith being founded on the word of God, which is imperishable, cannot be shaken by the voice of human reason or by any temporal event.

Among the numerous converts, gathered into the Church in the island of Japan by the preaching of St. Francis Xavier, was the king of Bungo, one of the Japanese provinces, his conversion being followed by that of many thousands of his people, and even of some of the neighbouring princes. A severe storm was soon after raised against the Christian religion, the missioners being assailed with odious calumnies, and every effort being made to destroy the faith of the recent converts. Upon this occasion the king of Bungo made the following noble and solemn protest: "I swear in your presence, O Almighty God, that if all the fathers of the Society of Jesus, by whose ministry you have called me to Chris-

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tianity, should renounce their own teaching, and even if I were assured that all the Christians of Europe had denied your Name, I would still confess, acknowledge and adore you as the Only, True, Almighty God of the universe, and this even at the cost of my life."—*Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.*

Q. What does Hope enable us to do?

A. It enables us to expect with confidence that God will give us salvation, and all things necessary to obtain it, if we do what He requires of us.

We come now, my dear children, to speak of the second Theological virtue, namely, *Hope.* And what is Hope? It is that supernatural power or habit of the soul, bestowed upon us in Baptism, which *enables us to expect with confidence that God will give us salvation, and all things necessary to obtain it, if we do what He requires of us.* From this you will see that Hope is founded on Faith, for how can we expect with confidence the gifts of God, unless we first *believe* that God is able and willing, and has promised to bestow them. Hence there can be no Hope without Faith, though Faith may exist without Hope. Thus a man who believes in the truths of religion, may fall into despair, as Judas did, who no doubt believed that Jesus was the Son of God, come into the world to save mankind, and who yet lost all hope at the thought of his own grievous sin in betraying his Divine Master, and went and hung himself in despair.

As the virtue of Faith is founded on God's Truth, so does that of Hope rest in his Goodness, his Power and his Divine Promises. In other words, we *believe* because God, being Truth itself, cannot be deceived or deceive us; but we *hope* for eternal life which includes the means to obtain it, *because he is willing and able, and has promised on certain conditions to* grant it. And what are those conditions? The con-

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dition for obtaining eternal life is that we keep his commandments; the condition for obtaining God's grace, which will enable us to keep his commandments, is that we seek it by Prayer and the Sacraments. It is for this reason, as I told you, that the two chapters of the Catechism, which treat of Prayer and the Sacraments, are headed with the word *Hope*. These are indeed the principal ways in which we exercise our Hope; while at the same time they are the conditions on which God has promised to grant us the grace we ask for.

The Catechism says that Hope enables us to expect with confidence that God will give us *salvation, and all things necessary to obtain it*, if we do what he requires of us. Eternal life, therefore, and the means to obtain it, are the proper *object* of our Hope, in other words, what we may justly hope for. Hence we may hope for God's pardon if we truly repent; we may hope for his grace to overcome our faults and temptations if we earnestly implore it; we may hope on the same condition for the gift of final perseverance, &c., since all these things will certainly help us to secure our salvation. On the other hand, we have no reason to hope for the goods of this world, for power, riches, honours, &c., except as far as God sees them useful or necessary to our souls. Hence our Blessed Lord, when he was asked by the mother of SS. James and John, to place her sons one on his right hand and the other on his left in the temporal kingdom which she thought he was about to establish, told her that she knew not what she asked in soliciting earthly honours for her children, but that they should have a share in the chalice of his Passion, which would help them to obtain eternal rewards.*

It is in Baptism that we first receive the habit of

* Matt. xx. 21, &c.

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Hope, as we do also the habits of Faith and Charity. It is increased in the soul whenever we exercise it, and this we do principally, as I have told you, by Prayer and the Sacraments. The remembrance of the Infinite Power, and Goodness and Providence of God, of his Incarnation and Death, and of the loving promises he has made us in the Holy Scripture, will also serve greatly to increase our Hope. Hence we should not fail to call these things to mind, if ever we feel tempted to lose courage and despond; "Call upon me," says the Lord, "in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee."* "Ask and it shall be given you."† "No one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded."‡ No, my dear children, from the beginning of the world it hath never been heard, that God hath refused the prayer of the humble suppliant, or hath rejected him, who placed his hope and confidence in the Divine Mercy.

TEMPTATION OF ST. FRANCIS OF SALES.

St. Francis of Sales, while a student at the University of Paris, was assailed by a most distressing temptation against the virtue of Hope. The devil finding it impossible to induce him to commit a wilful sin, suggested to his mind that all that he was doing to please God was of no avail, for it was already decreed that he should be eternally lost, and that he was doomed to blaspheme God for ever in hell. In vain did he struggle against so terrible a thought, it pursued him by day and by night, plunging him into the most profound melancholy, and causing his very body to waste away with the violence of the conflict. This temptation lasted for a whole month, for, unhappily, shame prevented him from declaring it to his confessor, a course which would have at once defeated the artifices of the devil, and restored his soul to its usual peace.

At length Almighty God took pity on the sad condition of the virtuous youth, and inspired him with the means of obtaining his deliverance from the temptation. One evening, returning to his home after attending the college lectures, he

* Ps. xlix. 15. † Matt. vii. 7. ‡ Ecclus. ii. 11.

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entered the Church of St. Stephen, and there observing on the wall a tablet, inscribed with the prayer of St. Bernard, "Remember, O most holy Virgin Mary," he began to recite it with great fervour. Then prostrate before her altar, he renewed the vow of virginity which he had already made to her, and promised, moreover, to recite daily the Rosary in her honour, at the same time earnestly imploring her to obtain for him, that if he were destined to be separated from God hereafter, he might at least love him in this world with his whole heart and with all his strength. No sooner had he thus prayed, than the cloud passed away in a moment from his mind, and he saw clearly that God, who so earnestly desires the salvation of every one, can certainly never reject those who wish from their hearts to love and to serve him.—*Life of St. Francis of Sales.*

In the Old Testament, my dear children, we have many beautiful examples of the heroic exercise of Hope, such as the histories of Job, of Esther and of Judith, of Daniel in the lions' den, and of the three children in the fiery furnace, &c. The story, however, which I am going to relate to you, will, perhaps, please you more than any other, as it shows how even a boy can become a hero, when his soul is animated with a generous confidence in the Power and Goodness of God.

DAVID AND GOLIATH.

The Israelites, being at war with the Philistines, lay encamped in their neighbourhood under the command of Saul, expecting a speedy battle. At that time there was in the camp of the Philistines a certain giant named Goliath, who coming out daily in front of the tents, openly defied the Jewish warriors to single combat, at the same time uttering the most horrible blasphemies against their God. So great was the fear inspired by the huge size and prodigious strength of Goliath, that no one was found in the camp of the Israelites who dared to accept the challenge, though Saul had publicly promised riches and honours, nay even his daughter in marriage, to whoever succeeded in slaying the blasphemer.

Now it happened that a certain shepherd boy, named David, came to the Israelite camp to bring food to his three brethren, who served in the royal army. Hearing the challenge and blasphemies of Goliath, he was moved with a holy

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zeal, and blushed with shame that no one could be found brave enough to undertake the combat. Wherefore, knowing that God could avenge himself as well by the arm of a boy as by a strong army, he offered himself to the king as ready to engage the giant. Hereupon Saul girt him with his own sword, and clothed him with his own armour, which, however, David soon laid aside, finding it too cumbrous, and trusting more to the Divine protection than to the skill of man.

"And" David, says the Sacred Writer, "took his staff, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them into the shepherd's scrip which he had with him, and he took a sling in his hand and went forth against the Philistine. And when the Philistine looked and beheld David, he despised him. And he said to David, *Am I a dog that thou comest against me with a staff? Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.* And David said to the Philistine, *Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts. This day, and the Lord will deliver thee into my hand, and I will slay thee, and take away thy head from thee, and I will give the carcasses of the army of the Philistines to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.*

"And he put his hand into his scrip and took a stone, and he struck and slew the Philistine. And as David had no sword in his hand, he ran and stood over the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath, and slew him, and cut off his head. And the Philistines seeing that their champion was dead, fled away."—I. *Kings* xvii.

In this history, my dear children, we have a beautiful figure of the Christian youth, fighting against and overcoming that terrible Goliath, the devil, by the aid of an humble and generous confidence in the Divine protection. Knowing his own weakness, he relies not on himself, but places, like David, all his trust in God, whom he invokes in all dangers and temptations, saying with David himself, "I am needy and poor, O God, help me,"* but adding with St. Paul, "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me."†

* Ps. lxix. 6. † Phil. iv. 13.

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Q. What does Charity enable us to do?

A. It enables us to love God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves.

The last of the Theological virtues is *Charity*, by which we mean that supernatural habit of the soul which *enables us to love God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves* for the sake of God. Charity is placed last among the three, because Faith and Hope must go before it, since no one can *love* God who does not first believe and hope in him. Charity, therefore, depends and is founded on Faith and Hope, nor can it exist without them. Thus, if we compare Faith to the foundation of a house, Hope will be the walls, and Charity the roof, without which the whole building is incomplete. The roof may fall, while the walls and foundation remains; so Charity may be lost by mortal sin, while Faith and Hope still continue to exist. On the other hand, if the walls of a house give way, the roof must perish, and if the foundation fails, the whole building becomes a ruin. So it is, that if we lose Hope, we lose Charity as well; but if we lose Faith, the whole spiritual edifice, which is composed of these three virtues, is destroyed.

Though Charity comes after Faith and Hope, since we must believe and hope before we can love, yet St. Paul tells us that it is the greatest of these three virtues. And why so? First of all, because it will last for ever; whereas, Faith will no longer exist when we see in the light of God what we here believe on his Divine Word, and Hope will be done away with when we possess in heaven what we here hope for. Again, Charity is a nobler virtue, for the Love of God contains less of self than Faith or Hope, and unites us more closely to him. Hence it is that St. Paul says, "The greatest of these is Charity."*

* I Cor. xiii. 13.

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As to the *necessity* of Charity, the same Apostle tells us, that all our knowledge and good works, and sufferings; nay even the sacrifice of life itself, will be of no avail without this virtue. "If I should speak," says he, "with the tongues of Angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burnt, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."* Our Blessed Lord himself also, in the parable of the marriage feast, shows us that no one can be admitted to the heavenly banquet without the wedding garment of charity.†

The *object* of the virtue of Charity, my dear children, is God, either as considered in Himself or as seen in his creatures. God is also the *motive* of Charity. We love God because he is infinitely Holy, Wise, Amiable, Beautiful, Merciful, &c.; and we love our neighbour because he is the work of God's hands, and because God himself loves him, and has commanded the same to us. Thus Charity contains two precepts, expressed in those words of the Catechism, which are the very words of Jesus Christ himself,—1. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.* 2. *And thy neighbour as thyself.*‡ These two precepts of Charity we shall come to consider in our next instruction.§

I will now relate to you the beautiful story of Joseph Lin, who suffered not many years since for

* I. Cor. xiii. 1—3. † Matt. xxii. 11—13. ‡ Luke x. 27.

§ The Virtue of Charity is further explained in the Fifteenth and Nineteenth Instructions.

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the faith. It will show the power of Divine Love, which is able to transform a poor, aged and ignorant man into a hero and a martyr.

A MARTYR OF DIVINE LOVE.

Joseph Lin, who was martyred for the faith in the year 1839, was a native of Corea, a country bordering upon China, where for many years a bitter persecution has raged against the Church. Though a pagan himself, his wife and children were Christians, and his son was pilot of the vessel which conveyed the illustrious priest and martyr Andrew Kim to his mission, contrary to the strict and cruel laws of the country. For this offence the young pilot was thrown into prison, but having saved his life by a base apostacy, Almighty God by a miracle of grace, transferred the crown of martyrdom from the Christian son to the pagan father.

Joseph, therefore, being cast into prison along with his son, for in those countries the whole family often suffers for the act of one, began by the Divine inspiration to reflect on those truths of the Christian religion of which he had heard. Corresponding faithfully with the light and grace that God gave him, he soon became inflamed with an ardent desire of dying for Jesus Christ. Being summoned before the judge, he declared himself a Christian, and showed by his noble and generous words, how deeply the love of God had become imprinted on his heart. "Do you know the Commandments?" asked the judge. "No," replied Joseph, "I do not know them," "Then you cannot be a Christian," said the Mandarin. "Great Mandarin," said the martyr in reply, "among the children of a family there are some big and others little. Some have the use of reason, others have not, and there are even some who are still infants at the breast. Now, among these, the bigger ones know their father better, the younger ones know him less; but they all *love* him. It is the same in the Christian religion. I am like a little babe that can scarcely lisp, but though I do not know God like the rest, I know that he is my father, and for that reason I love him, and wish to die for him."

The generous confessor of the faith was instructed and baptised in prison by Father Kim. Enraged at his boldness, the Mandarin ordered him to be inhumanly beaten with a wooden plank, which torment he bore with heroic patience. He was afterwards strangled, and at the moment when the

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fatal cord was fastened round his neck, was heard to say, "Oh, Jesus, my master! I give you all that I have—my body and my soul."

Thus did this true lover of Jesus Christ win for himself the glorious crown of martyrdom, which his son had so unhappily lost.—*Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.*

FIFTEENTH INSTRUCTION.

The Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. The Two Precepts of Charity. The Corporal Works of Mercy.

Q. How many are the Cardinal Virtues?

A. Four: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance.

After the Theological, my dear children, come the *Cardinal Virtues*, which are these four—*Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance.* These virtues are sometimes called *moral virtues*, because they form our *morals*, or manners, aright, so as to enable us to fulfil properly all our duties. Considered as mere natural good qualities, or, as we sometimes say, *human virtues*, they existed even among pagans; hence you read in Ancient History of "the Prudence of Cincinnatus," "the Justice of Aristides," &c. Here, of course, we consider them as *Christian Virtues*, that is, as supernatural habits infused into the soul by God, which enable us to form our daily lives according to his holy Law. In this sense we may say that they are the daughters of Charity, which comprises in itself the practice of every virtue, according to that of St. Paul, "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely," &c.* At

* I. Cor. xiii. 4, &c.

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the same time, it is no less true that the four Cardinal Virtues also contain within themselves all the others, and that even that the Theological Virtues are comprised therein; for, whatever virtue there is, may, as you will shortly see, be reduced to one of these four heads, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude or Temperance. And hence it is that they are called *Cardinal*, from a Latin word, meaning *a hinge;* for, as a door or a gate hangs and turns upon its hinge, so do the other virtues depend on one or other of the four Cardinal ones.

First of the four comes *Prudence*, which is that supernatural habit of the soul which enables us to see and take the proper means to arrive at the possession of God. Of course, I am not speaking of *worldly prudence*, which is often true folly and cannot justly be called a virtue, but of that heavenly prudence which guides us, and directs our actions aright, so that we may avoid the dangers which beset us, and preserve the straight road which leads to eternal life. Thus a prudent man will never act with rashness, but will carefully consider each step that he takes in his passage through life, and in matters of doubt will be guided by the advice of the wise and virtuous. In all things he will consult his spiritual rather than his temporal interests, and will readily sacrifice the false and fleeting goods of this world to secure the true and everlasting riches of the next. The Holy Scripture is full of the praises of this excellent virtue, on the possession of which, indeed, our salvation depends. "Blessed," says the Wise Man, "is the man that findeth wisdom and is rich in prudence. She is more precious than all riches, and all the things that are desired are not to be compared with her." *

* Prov. iii. 13, 15.

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The history of Solomon in the Holy Scripture, shows us with what zeal and from what quarter we must seek for Prudence. It proves to us also how pleasing to God is the desire of this virtue, and how abundantly he rewards those who prefer it before earthly goods.

SOLOMON'S PRAYER FOR WISDOM.

"And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the precepts of David his father. And the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, saying, *Ask what thou wilt that I should give thee.* And Solomon said, *O Lord God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father, and I am but a child, and know not how to go out and come in. And thy servant is in the midst of the people which thou hast chosen, an immense people which cannot be numbered or counted for multitude. Give therefore to thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, and discern between good and evil.*

"And the word was pleasing to the Lord that Solomon had asked such a thing. And the Lord said to Solomon, *Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life or riches, nor the lives of thy enemies, but hast asked for thyself wisdom to discern judgment, behold I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart, insomuch that there hath been no one like thee before thee, nor shall arise after thee. Yea, and the thing also which thou didst not ask, I have given thee; to wit, riches and glory, so that no one hath been like thee among the kings in all days heretofore. And if thou wilt walk in my ways as thy father walked, I will lengthen thy days.*"—III. KINGS iii.

The second Cardinal Virtue is *Justice*, which is the habitual desire to give to every one his due. You see that, as a Cardinal Virtue, Justice has a wider meaning than we commonly give it; for what we usually mean by being *just* is *perfectly honest* in our dealings with our neighbour; whereas a just man, in the sense of one who possesses this Cardinal Virtue, is *a man who fulfils all his duties*, whether to God, to his neighbour, or to himself. This, indeed, is the

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meaning which the word *justice* generally has in the Sacred Scripture; for example, our Lord says, "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" * that is, unless you are better men than the Pharisees, and fulfil all your duties more faithfully. In like manner, St. Joseph is praised by the Holy Ghost as a *just man*,† which does not mean simply that he was an honest man, but that he was *good in every way*, fulfilling perfectly his duty to God, to his neighbour, and to himself. You see then that Justice embraces many virtues, for example, piety and the fulfilment of all our religious duties, obedience to our parents and superiors, honesty, truthfulness, &c. Indeed, a perfectly just man in this sense is nothing less than a Saint.

Fortitude is the next of the Cardinal Virtues, and is also, as you have seen, one of the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost. It enables us to face with courage, and generously overcome, all the difficulties with which our salvation is beset, and to bear our cross patiently after our Blessed Lord. The martyrs were conspicuous for the heroic exercise of this virtue; no torments, however cruel, not even death itself, could for a moment shake their fidelity to God. Those generous missionaries, who go to preach the gospel in pagan countries, readily facing so many dangers and suffering so many privations for the love of Jesus Christ, are also bright examples of the virtue of Fortitude. We too, my dear children, are continually called upon to practice the same virtue. It is this which will enable us to fulfil our daily duties faithfully, even when they are distasteful and painful to us. It is this which will help us to deny our appetites and desires, not only what is unlawful, but

* Matt. v. 20 † Matt. i. 19.

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sometimes also what is permitted, for the love of Jesus Christ. It is this same virtue which supports us under the pains of sickness, as well as the other crosses and trials of life, and which enables us to persevere to the end in the grace and love of God. Fortitude is, therefore, the mother of diligence, patience, self-denial, and final perseverance. Let us implore of the Holy Ghost to grant us this excellent virtue, and let us ask it by the intercession of our Patron Saint, for it is by means of Fortitude that the Saints have conquered and obtained their crowns.

The last of the Cardinal Virtues is *Temperance*, by which we mean a *moderation in all things*, not merely in eating and drinking, but in the gratification of all our appetites and desires. Temperance, therefore, regulates our whole lives, preserving us from every *excess*, which is always sinful, and which sometimes we are apt to fall into even in the best and most virtuous actions. For example, the mother of a family, who is devout and fond of prayer, might without the virtue of Temperance or Moderation fall into a sin of excess by giving her whole time to that exercise, and thus neglecting the care of her family. Again, a pious youth, devoted to self-denial, might without Temperance injure himself by excessive fasts. But it is not often that we exceed in what is good; and it is chiefly in regard to those things which indulge our self-love, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and the different pleasures of life, that we stand in need of the safeguard of Temperance.

If you wish, my dear children, to see an excellent example of the exercise of the four Cardinal Virtues, you will find one in the life of the great precursor of our Lord, St. John the Baptist.

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ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST A MODEL OF THE CARDINAL VIRTUES.

The great St. John the Baptist, who was sent before our Blessed Lord to prepare the way for Him, was guided in his very childhood by the spirit of *Prudence*, which led him into the desert, far away from the temptations of the world, and taught him to subdue the desires of the flesh by the practice of penance and self-denial. Conversing with God in solitude, he earnestly implored of Him the gift of Prudence, which would enable him to fulfil faithfully the important office committed to him, and thus accomplish the Divine Will in his regard. His humble prayer, like that of Solomon, was heard by God, who inspired his words with a heavenly wisdom that enabled him to touch the hearts of the most hardened sinners, and to prepare the souls of the multitude to receive our Lord, whom, guided by an interior light, he pointed out to them. So remarkable was St. John for his prudent counsels, that when thrown into prison by Herod, that wicked tyrant, who afterwards beheaded him, was wont to consult him on matters of importance, "and when he heard him," adds the Holy Scripture, he "did many things, and he heard him willingly." *

St. John the Baptist was equally remarkable for the exercise of perfect *Justice*, for he spared himself no labour, no sacrifice, to fulfil his duty perfectly both to God and man. See him in his solitude in the desert: how constant was he in the practice of fervent prayer and generous self-denial! See him as a missionary on the banks of the Jordan: how zealous in exhorting sinners to repentance, and yet how patient with them, and how unsparing of himself in his Apostolic labours! Behold him, finally, at the court of Herod: how superior was he to all human respect, and how faithful to the interests of his Divine Master! "It is not lawful for thee," said he, "to have thy brother's wife," † though at the same time he was well aware that his freedom of speech was at the peril of his life. Truly was St. John the Baptist a *just* man, since he spared not his labour or even his blood to *fulfil all justice*, that is, his whole duty both to God and man!

But what shall we say of his Fortitude? My dear children, his thirty years in the desert, exposed to all the burning heat of the sun in summer, and to the bitter inclemency of the cold in winter, with no other raiment than a garment of camel's-hair, no other food than locusts and wild honey, prove that even in his early youth he was a perfect example of this

* Mark vi. 20. † Mark vi. 18.

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virtue. Add to this the toils and labours of his Apostolic life, the generous courage with which he faced, in defence of God's law, the anger of a wicked tyrant, and, finally, the invincible patience with which he bore a long imprisonment and a cruel martyrdom, and you will easily admit that St. John the Baptist was not only a *just* and *prudent* man, but that he possessed in the highest degree the virtue of *Fortitude.*

Finally, St. John was singularly gifted with the virtue of *Temperance,* and here I do not refer merely to his extraordinary abstinence, living as he did in the desert on locusts and wild honey, but to his general moderation in all his actions. In a word, he regulated his whole conduct, not by impulse or passion, but by the rules of conscience and right reason, and this we may see even in the works which he undertook for the glory of God. See him on the occasion of our Lord's Baptism humbly protesting his unworthiness to baptise One whom by an interior light he recognised as the Son of God. "I ought," he says, "to be baptised by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" * Precious though his humility was in God's sight, it might have degenerated, by excess, into pride and obstinacy had he not yielded at once to the command of Jesus: "Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all Justice." † Behold him, again, gathering about him a band of fervent disciples, whom he trained, by word and example, to the practice of virtue. Yet his holy zeal in their instruction might have become actually sinful had not Temperance stepped in to moderate it, reminding him that he was but an instrument to lead them to Christ. Wherefore, seeing our Blessed Lord walking near, he said to the two that were with him, "Behold the Lamb of God! and the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." ‡

From this we see that while the three Cardinal Virtues of *Prudence, Justice,* and *Fortitude* adorned the soul of St. John with every excellent quality, *Temperance* completed the work by guiding the exercise of the other virtues according to the rules of right reason and the Law of God.

Q. What are the two precepts of Charity?

A. 1. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. 2. And thy neighbour as thyself.

* Matt. iii. 41. † Matt. iii. 15. ‡ John i. 35—36.

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These two *precepts*, or commandments of Charity, were spoken by our Blessed Lord himself in answer to a question put to him by a certain lawyer, "Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?" And Jesus said, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.** Moreover, on another occasion he declared that on these two commandments depend "the whole law and the prophets," † that is, that they contain the whole duty which God has imposed upon us in his Divine Law, and explained to us by his prophets. Since, then, the keeping of them is of such extreme importance, let us examine carefully their meaning, and in what manner we shall best be able to discharge the duties which they impose.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. These words, my dear children, reveal to us the Infinite Goodness of God, who, knowing how easily we are led astray with the love of worldly things, has bound us by a strict commandment to love him—Him, who is alone worthy of our love, and whose love alone can satisfy our hearts. He is our *Lord* and our *God*, that is, our Sovereign Master and the Supreme Being to whom we owe all things, and who possesses in himself every possible perfection. Oh, how great an honour and privilege it is for us to be *permitted* to love Him—for *us*, so little and mean, to be allowed to love and have for our friend a God so Great, so Holy, so Rich, so Amiable! But he has not only permitted us, he has even bound us by a strict commandment to love him, saying to us by the lips of his Divine Son, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.* Yes,

* Luke x. 25—27. † Matt. xxii. 40.

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my dear children, he tells us that we must set no bounds or limits to our love—we must love him *with our whole heart* by consecrating to him our will with all its affections; *with our whole soul* by submitting to him not only our higher faculties but also the lower part of our nature, namely, our passions and appetites; *with all our mind* by conversing with him in prayer, and bowing down our understanding to the obedience of faith; and, finally, *with all our strength* by loving him with all the fervour of which we are capable. Such is the magnificent command of God, contained in the first precept of Charity. "And the second," says our Lord, "is like to this, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" But how is it like? Because we must love our neighbour in God and for God, which is the very motive for which we must love God himself. Hence, if we love our neighbour with a true and perfect love, we shall love all alike, both poor and rich, little and great, enemies and friends—wishing well to all, praying for all, doing good to all, not for the sake of our own advantage, but for the pure love of our Divine Lord. Such was the love which animated the Saints, and made them sacrifice themselves so generously for the salvation of their fellow-men.

You will now understand better, my dear children, what our Blessed Lord means when He says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself.*" In other words, he bids us love our neighbour *in the same manner and from the same motive.* For we cannot love our neighbour *as much* as ourselves, since we must always prefer our own salvation to his; though, at the same time, we should be ready to sacrifice such lesser goods as riches, honours, or even life, if thereby we can secure his eternal happiness, which should be the dearest thing to us after the salvation of our own souls. The meaning, therefore, of *as ourselves,* is

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that we must love both him and ourselves as the creatures of God, made to God's image, and redeemed by the Blood of his Son; also, that we must love him according to the same rules of right reason, preferring, for example, his spiritual to his temporal good, his eternal to his earthly interests. Thus, we love our neighbour as ourselves when we love him for God's sake, and try to promote both his temporal and eternal happiness in the same manner as we do our own.

A beautiful example of the way in which we must love our neighbour is given by our Blessed Lord himself in explanation of this very precept. The history I refer to is the

PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

"A certain man," said Jesus, "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him, and having wounded him went away, leaving him half dead.

"And it chanced that a certain priest went down the same way, and seeing him passed by. In like manner also a Levite when he was near the place and saw him passed by.

"But a certain Samaritan being on his journey came near him, and seeing him was moved with compassion. And going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and setting him upon his own beast brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two pence, and gave to the host, and said, *Take care of him, and whatsoever thou shall spend over and above, I at my return will repay thee.*

"*Which of these three in thy opinion was neighbour to him who fell among the robbers?* And the young man said, *He who showed mercy to him.* And Jesus said, *Go and do thou in like manner.*"—LUKE x. 30—37.

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, which we now come to, are closely connected with the second Precept of Charity, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And why so? Because it is by them that we show that our love for our neigh-

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bour is not a mere name, but a *real* love, manifesting itself by deeds, and prompting us to sacrifice our own pleasure, comfort or interest for his sake. These Works of Mercy are, indeed, the test of true charity, for as he, who truly loves God, keepeth his commandments and doth his Holy Will, so does he, who truly loves his neighbour for the sake of God, do all in his power to relieve him in his corporal and spiritual wants. Wherefore the Apostle St. John says, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. He that hath the substance of this world and shall see his brother in need, and shall put up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?"*

The Catechism teaches us that there are Seven Corporal and Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, that is to say, that there are seven principal ways in which we may assist our neighbour in his bodily wants, and also seven ways in which we may relieve the necessities of his soul. Without doubt the Spiritual Works of Mercy are nobler and higher in their nature than the Corporal ones, inasmuch as they promote the eternal interests of our neighbour, whereas the Corporal Works only affect his well being in this life; at the same time we must remember that even the Corporal Works of Mercy are so pleasing in the sight of God that our Lord declares that at the last day he will judge our lives and decide our eternal lot by the manner in which we have performed them. Moreover, the Corporal Works of Mercy often require a greater sacrifice on our own part, and may thus become to us an occasion of greater merit.

* I. John iii. 17, 18.

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Q. Say the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy.

A. 1. To feed the hungry. 2. To give drink to the thirsty. 3. To clothe the naked. 4. To harbour the harbourless. 5. To visit the sick. 6. To visit the imprisoned. 7. To bury the dead.

To feed the hungry and *to give drink to the thirsty* are the first two Corporal Works of Mercy here mentioned. The third is *to clothe the naked*, and the fourth *to harbour the harbourless*, that is, to give shelter and a home to those who have none. Food, and clothing, and shelter, my dear children, are the first and principal corporal wants of man. Without suitable and sufficient food his body will soon waste away; and without proper clothing and shelter he will easily contract disease, and perish from exposure to the wet and cold. Hence it is, that those who exercise themselves in works of charity, usually devote themselves in the first place to the supply of these most pressing wants. For they are not content with *pitying* the necessities of the poor, but apply themselves according to their means to relieve them; otherwise they would incur the reproach of St. James, "My brethren, if a brother or sister be naked and want daily food, and one of you say to him, *Go in peace, be you warmed and filled*, yet give them not those things which are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?"*

The fifth Corporal Work of Mercy is *to visit the sick*. "I was sick, and you visited me," † says our Blessed Lord. Speaking of this as a *corporal* work, it refers to the nursing of the sick, and the providing them with those comforts and remedies which will tend to restore the health of their body, or at least to lighten the pains and tediousness of their sickness. But we must not confine ourselves to the relief of their bodily wants when we visit the sick, we

* James ii. 15, 16. † Matt. xxv. 36.

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must make it also a Spiritual Work of Mercy by consoling and encouraging them in their sufferings, and teaching them to receive their sickness with resignation from the hands of God as a trial sent for their purification and greater merit. Of this great act of Charity I have already spoken in explaining to you the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. It was a favourite practice of the Saints of God, and it is one which affords the opportunity for the exercise of many virtues.

The sixth Corporal Work of Mercy is *to visit the imprisoned.* In former ages, and it is even yet the case in some countries, those who were imprisoned for crime or taken captive in war, were left dependent for support on their own means or the charity of their neighbour. Frequently the prison had a grating open to the public road, through the bars of which the prisoners stretched out their hands and implored relief from the passers by. To visit and relieve the wants of these unhappy creatures was always considered in the Church as a great act of charity, and many fervent souls and pious confraternities devoted themselves especially to this good work. Thus we find that there were two religious orders instituted for the express purpose of visiting and ransoming captives, namely, the order of Trinitarians, founded by St. John of Matha, and that of our Lady of Mercy, which owes its origin to St. Peter Nolasco. In this country few except the clergy themselves are permitted to enter the prisons; moreover, the prisoners are provided with all that they require during the time of their confinement. It may, however, be sometime in our power to assist those who are falsely accused to defend themselves at their trial, and it is always a great charity to help the poor prisoners on coming out of gaol to obtain honest employment. Let us not fail to do this when the

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opportunity is afforded us, and we shall hear one day from the lips of our Blessed Lord those consoling words, "I was in prison, and you came to me." *

The last of the Corporal Works of Mercy is *to bury the dead.* Our bodies, my dear children, are a noble work of the hand of God, and are consecrated by Him as His temple by Baptism and the other Sacraments. They are, moreover, destined, if we die in the grace of God, to be the companions of our souls for all eternity in heaven. Therefore, we should treat them throughout life with due respect, and after death they should be laid with reverence in the earth to await the final resurrection. Hence it is that the religious burial of the dead has always been an object of the tender care of the Church. For this purpose she has established consecrated cemeteries, religious rites, and pious confraternities, encouraging her children on all occasions to show a becoming respect to the remains of the departed. How pleasing to God this work of mercy is, we may learn from the history of Tobias, who is especially praised in the Holy Scripture, because at great personal sacrifice and peril "he was careful to bury the dead and those that were slain." † Wherefore the Angel announced to him, that his prayers had ascended to heaven, and were accepted at the throne of God: "When thou didst pray with tears and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord." ‡ Let us, my dear children, imitate the holy Tobias, by exercising or partaking in this work of mercy when occasion offers, for thus we shall secure for ourselves a favourable hearing at the throne of Divine Mercy.

In conclusion, let us remember that our Blessed

* Matt. xxv. 36. † Tob. i. 20. ‡ Tob. xii. 12.

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Lord, while earnestly exhorting us to the practice of the Corporal Works of Mercy, warns us against the danger of spoiling the merit of our good actions by an unworthy motive, for example, that of vain glory or a desire to be esteemed by men. "When thou dost an alms-deed," he says, "sound not a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honoured by men. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth; that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee."* Whence we learn, that if we wish our alms to be meritorious in the sight of God, we must carefully avoid seeking the applause of men, being moved only by the pure motive of pleasing Almighty God. In the person of the poor we must recognise the person of Jesus Christ, who declares that he will consider as done to himself what we do to one of his disciples: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."† Oh, my dear children, how consoling a thought! Envy not any more those holy women, Martha and Mary, who received Jesus into their house, washed his feet, and ministered to his wants; for you have it in your power to do the same yourselves. When you feed the hungry, you feed Jesus Christ; when you clothe the naked, you clothe Jesus Christ; when you minister in any way to the wants of the poor, you relieve the necessities of your Divine Lord. For has he not declared that he will consider it as the self-same thing, and will so reward it? Listen to his own Divine words in the sentence which he will pronounce at the last day upon the good and the wicked.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.
(See Vol. i., p. 123.)

* Matt. vi. 2—4. † Matt. xxv. 40.

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If you read the Lives of the Saints, my dear children, you will there find some beautiful examples of those who have visibly relieved Jesus Christ in the persons of his poor. For our Blessed Lord, to reward their charity, and to show how truly he takes what is done to his poor as done to himself, has at times assumed the form of some destitute or afflicted creature, and implored an alms for the love of God.

ST. MARTIN AND THE BEGGAR.

St. Martin, of Tours, in the early part of his life, followed the military profession, and served in the army of the Roman Emperor. His parents were idolaters, but Martin, though not yet baptised, had placed himself under instruction, and cherished in his heart an ardent desire of embracing the Christian religion.

One day in the midst of a very hard winter, as he was marching with other officers and soldiers, he met at the gates of Amiens a poor man almost naked and trembling with cold, who was begging alms of the passers by. Martin, seeing that those who went before him took no notice of this miserable object, looked upon him as reserved for himself. His numerous charities had, however, exhausted all his means, and he had nothing left but his arms and the clothes on his back. Whereupon he drew his sword, cut his cloak in two pieces, and gave one to the beggar, reserving the other for himself. Some of the bystanders laughed at the figure he made, while others were ashamed of not having relieved the poor man. The following night Martin saw in his sleep Jesus Christ, dressed in the half garment which he had given in charity, and was told by our Lord to look well at it, and see whether he knew it. He then heard Jesus say to a troop of Angels that surrounded him, "Martin, yet a catechumen, hath clothed me with this garment." This vision inspired him with fresh ardour, and determined him speedily to receive Baptism.—*Butler's Lives of the Saints.*

THERE IS NO NEED TO COUNT OUR ALMS.

A noble Roman lady, named Melania, coming to visit the Abbot St. Pambo in his monastery in Egypt, brought with her three hundred pounds weight of silver which she presented to him, begging him to accept a portion of the wealth

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with which God had blessed her. The holy man was sitting at his work, making mats, when she arrived, and without interrupting his labour, or looking at her or her offering, contented himself with saying that God would reward her charity. Then turning to his disciple he said, "Take and distribute it among the poorest monasteries." The lady stood still, expecting that he would take some further notice of so considerable a present, but as he still went on with his work without ever glancing at the chest of money, she at length said, "Father, I do not know whether you are aware that there are three hundred pounds weight of silver in that chest." "Daughter," replied the Saint, without taking his eyes off his work, "He to whom you have made the offering, knows very well how much it weighs without your telling him. If, indeed, you had given it to *me*, there might be some reason to inform me of the weight; but if you really intended it as a present to God, who did not disdain the poor widow's mite, do not say any more about it." So saying, he dismissed her, much edified with the lesson she had received.—*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

SIXTEENTH INSTRUCTION.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy. The Eight Beatitudes.

Q. Say the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy.

A. 1. To convert the sinner.
2. To instruct the ignorant.
3. To counsel the doubtful.
4. To comfort the sorrowful.
5. To bear wrongs patiently.
6. To forgive injuries.
7. To pray for the living and the dead.

We come now to speak of the *Spiritual Works of Mercy*, which are the most perfect fulfilment of that precept of Charity, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," inasmuch as they relate to the *soul* of our neighbour which is the noblest part of his nature, and to his *eternal* interests.

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The first four of these Works, namely, *to convert the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful*, belong more particularly to the office of the priesthood. All the faithful, however, are called upon to share, as far as circumstances will permit, in the performance of these good works. Thus for instance, each one has it in his power by prayer and good example, and sometimes also by pious exhortations, to aid in the great work of *converting sinners*, to accomplish which our Blessed Lord came down from heaven and died upon the cross. Oh, how great a consolation will it be to us when we come to die, if during life we have co-operated with our Lord in this work of charity! We shall, indeed, have done much towards obtaining pardon for our own sins, and securing our eternal salvation, according to those words of St. James, "My brethren, he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."*

The second Spiritual Work of Mercy, *the instruction of the ignorant* in the truths of religion, is no less in the power of every Christian, and we are equally called upon to exercise it. How many poor souls there are, who are lost through ignorance of the saving truths of religion, or for want of instruction in the duties of their state of life! Now we often have it in our power, and we ought to esteem it a great happiness, to help to remove that ignorance by instructing others in the doctrines and precepts of our holy religion. This we may do by teaching the Catechism, either privately or in the Sunday school, and also by lending books of instruction to those who are able to read. How many there are, who owe their conversion from sin or their knowledge of the

* James v. 20.

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true faith to the reading of some good book, which Providence, by the hands of some charitable person, has thrown in their way! Happy shall we be if God makes use of us as his instruments in this great work, for we shall inherit that magnificent promise of the Holy Ghost, "They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity."*

To counsel the doubtful, and to comfort the sorrowful, that is, to give good advice and consolation to those who are in need of it, are works of mercy which we may often have the opportunity of exercising, and which will secure for us a great reward hereafter. A word of good advice spoken in season, is often the means of preserving a soul from a lamentable fall, and we know by our own experience how much it relieves and lightens our sorrow, when we have a kind and loving friend to soothe and console us. Let *us* show the same tender compassion to others in their afflictions, which we would wish to meet with in our own trials. By so doing we shall give glory to God, and shall deserve a special grace and support in all our sorrows from Him who is entitled the "God of all consolation,"† and through her who is so justly called the "Comforter of the afflicted."

To bear wrongs patiently and *to forgive injuries,* the two next Spiritual Works of Mercy, are part of the duty of every Christian. Indeed, it is the very spirit of the Christian religion to suffer patiently the injuries we receive from others, and to forgive our enemies from our hearts. "I say to you," says our Blessed Lord, "not to resist evil, but if a man strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."‡ And again, "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven."§ "For if you forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offences. But if

* Dan. xii. 3. † II. Cor. i. 3. ‡ Matt. v. 39. § Luke vi. 37.

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you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your sins."* And not only has our Lord taught us by his Sacred Word, but much more by his Divine example in his cruel sufferings, that Patience and the Forgiveness of injuries are two of the principal virtues which should distinguish us as his disciples.

But you will wonder, perhaps, why *bearing wrongs patiently* is called a work of *Mercy*. It is easy to see that patience is of advantage to our own souls, but how is it an act of charity? Because, my dear children, by bearing patiently the evil which others do us, we prevent their further sin, inasmuch as we soothe their angry feelings, nay, often our very meekness will bring them to repentance; whereas, if we fly in a passion and reproach them, we increase their anger, and are the cause of their offending God still more. "A mild word breaketh wrath," says the Wise Man, "but a harsh word stirreth up fury."† And again, "A sweet word multiplieth friends and appeaseth enemies."‡

The last but not the least of the Spiritual Works of Mercy, is *to pray for the living and the dead*. For by prayer it is in our power both to draw down heavenly graces on those who are still combating on earth, and to shorten the imprisonment of the suffering souls in purgatory. Oh, how great is this privilege of prayer; and how abundant will be the reward of those who turn it to good account! By it, though we be simple and ignorant, we can convert sinners, open the eyes of unbelievers to the light of the true faith, strengthen the weak and fainthearted, comfort the afflicted, relieve the sufferings of the poor departed souls, and obtain for them a speedy entrance into eternal life. All this and much more

* Matt. vi. 14, 15. † Prov. xv. 1. ‡ Ecclus. vi. 5.

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is in our power, because God in his Goodness often makes his graces to depend upon our prayers. "Pray for one another that you may be saved,"* says St. James; and again, "It is a holy and wholesome thought," says the Holy Scripture, "to pray for the dead."† Let us, then, my dear children, exercise this great work of mercy to the utmost of our power. Let us pray for our holy father the Pope, for our pastors, our earthly parents, our relations and friends, and also for the conversion of all sinners, heretics and unbelievers. Let us also continually implore the Mercy of God on the poor souls in purgatory, especially on those who have been near and dear to us, or whom unhappily we have scandalised by our sins. To hear Mass, or to get a Mass said for any of these intentions, is a great work of charity, which will be repaid a hundred-fold; but if this be not always in our power, we can often at least, in the midst of our daily employment, offer up some "Hail Marys" for these intentions. "Blessed," says our Lord, "are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."‡ And if to him who gives even a cup of cold water in his name, our Lord has promised an abundant reward,§ what has he not in reserve for those, who by their prayers feed the hungry with the grace of God, and give the soul to drink of the refreshing waters of eternal life!

The following vision, related by St. Dionysius the Areopagite, one of the disciples of St. Paul, shows us that we should pray for *all*, and that to exclude any one from our prayers, on account of his sins, is utterly contrary to the spirit of Jesus Christ.

* James v. 16. † II. Mach. xii. 46. ‡ Matt. v. 7.
§ Matt. x. 42.

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VISION OF CARPUS.

In the time of St. Dionysius, there lived a certain Bishop, named Carpus, a pious and holy man, but over zealous against sinners. Now it happened that an infidel seduced a Christian from the faith, and Carpus, instead of praying for their conversion, was so moved with zeal, that he prayed to God to take them both out of this life, that they might not any longer offend him. While thus he prayed, he saw the heavens opened, and Jesus seated on his throne, surrounded by myriads of Angels. Casting his eyes again upon the earth, he beheld a deep abyss filled with serpents, on the slippery brink of which stood the two men on whom he had called down the Divine judgment. They stood pale and trembling, and apparently in a state of extreme misery. Then turning again to the heavens, he saw our Blessed Lord, with a look of profound pity, rise from his throne, and, coming down, stretch out his hand to help them. The Angels also came to assist them in their distress. Thereupon our Lord, turning to Carpus, said, "I am ready to suffer again for man's salvation, provided that he sin no more. And do *you* prefer that they should burn in the abyss, rather than enjoy the company of God and of the good and compassionate Angels?" Thus did our Lord reprove the Bishop for his indiscreet zeal.

St. Dionysius adds, "This vision I have heard from Carpus himself, and I believe it to be a true one."—*St. Dionys. Areop. ad Demophilum.*

Q. Say the Eight Beatitudes.

A. 1. Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

2. Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land.

3. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.

4. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall have their fill.

5. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

6. Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God.

7. Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.

8. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The *Eight Beatitudes*, or blessings, which were pronounced by Jesus Christ in his Sermon on the Mount, describe to us the character of a perfect

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Christian. Our Blessed Lord here sums up in a few short sentences the different virtues which will distinguish his disciples from the children of the world. Let us examine them well, and compare them with our own lives, that we may know whether we belong to the world or to Jesus Christ.

1. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, that is, those who are poor in heart and affection; for the spirit of the world is to love and make a God of riches, but the spirit of Jesus Christ is to set no esteem on worldly wealth, but only on the treasure of God's grace and friendship. Those, then, are *poor in spirit* who, if rich, do not set their heart on riches, but use them only as the stewards of God to advance his glory and promote the welfare of his creatures. Those, also, are *poor in spirit* who, if placed by God in a state of poverty, are resigned to that state, and content with the position which God has assigned to them. *Blessed* are such, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Not loving earthly riches, they shall possess heavenly treasures, and being conformed to the image of Jesus in his poverty, they shall enter with him into the possession of his eternal kingdom.

2. *Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land. Meekness*, my dear children, is that virtue which enables us, on receiving an injury, to restrain all desire of revenge. Such a disposition is a special mark of a true disciple of Jesus Christ, who says to us in the holy Gospel, "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart."* Those, therefore, will inherit this beatitude who, imitating the example of our Blessed Lord, when they are reviled do not revile, and when they suffer threaten not;† who render not evil for evil, but good for evil;‡ who love their enemies, do good to those that hate them, and

* Matt. xi. 29. † Pet. ii. 23. ‡ Rom. xii. 21.

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pray for those who persecute and calumniate them.* Blessed are such, *for they shall possess the land*, that true land of promise, which is the kingdom of heaven. But even in this world they shall in a certain sense possess the land, because by their meekness they shall disarm the anger of their adversaries, converting enemies into friends, and succeeding in all their undertakings. Thus the great Bishop of Geneva, St. Francis of Sales, converted more heretics by the influence of his sweet and amiable disposition and his extraordinary meekness under the most atrocious injuries, than he did by the power of his singular eloquence and profound learning.

MEEKNESS THE PROOF OF A HEAVENLY DOCTRINE.

When Father Fernandez, one of the companions of St. Francis Xavier, was preaching the Gospel to an assembled crowd in a certain city in the Indies, one of the rabble came near him as if to speak to him, and deliberately spat in his face. The holy missioner, without saying a word or manifesting the least emotion, took out his handkerchief, wiped his face and then continued his discourse as if nothing had happened. The people were filled with astonishment at his meekness, and those who had at first laughed at the insult offered him, could not help admiring the patience with which he had received it. Among those who were present was a certain learned doctor, who, reflecting on what he had seen with his own eyes, said to himself, "Surely this stranger must be right in saying that the doctrine which he announces is a *heavenly* doctrine, for a law which inspires such courage and greatness of soul, and which enables its disciples to gain such a complete victory over themselves, can only come from heaven." The sermon ended, he acknowledged publicly that the virtue of the preacher had convinced him; he then asked for Baptism, which was administered with all possible solemnity. This illustrious conversion was followed by many others, a convincing proof that "Example is the best sermon."—*Anecdotes Chretiennes.*

* Matt. v. 44.

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3. *Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.* "It is better," says the Wise Man, "to go into the house of mourning than into the house of feasting."* And why so, my dear children? Because the pleasures and enjoyments of this world are short and fleeting, nor can they ever satisfy the heart of man; while, on the other hand, afflictions borne patiently for the love of God, tears of repentance for our own sins, and those of tender compassion for the sorrows of others, merit for us the eternal joys and delights of paradise. "They who sow in tears," says the Psalmist, "will reap in joy."†

4. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall have their fill. Justice,* as we have already seen, is a cardinal virtue, including many others—in fact, all the virtues which enable us to fulfil our duty to God, our neighbour, and our own souls. *He,* then, hungers and thirsts after justice who ardently desires and earnestly strives to become good. Such a disposition is a sure sign that the soul will arrive at great perfection; for God helps those abundantly whom he sees to have a good will to love and serve him. Hence the Angels who appeared to the shepherds, sang, "Peace on earth to men of good will."‡ Such fervent and willing souls *shall* assuredly *be filled* here with heavenly grace, and hereafter with the delights of paradise.

5. *Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy*—in other words, those who show mercy and compassion to their fellow men shall meet with the same themselves from Almighty God. This our Blessed Lord has clearly declared in speaking of the sentence which he will pronounce at the last day, when the works of mercy which we shall have performed during life will plead for us most powerfully

* Ecclus. vii. 3. † Ps. cxxv. 5. ‡ Luke ii. 14.

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at his tribunal.* "Come," he will say to the good, "come, ye blessed of my Father, and possess ye the kingdom prepared for you; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat," &c. On the other hand, he will say to the wicked, "Depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire." And why? Because you have not exercised those same works of mercy during life, which would have obtained for you before death the grace of true repentance and the Divine pardon.

A SINNER CONVERTED BY ALMSGIVING.

A certain great sinner entering into himself, and being filled with terror at his sad condition, began to desire to change his life, but could not bring himself to detest his crimes as they deserved. Overwhelmed with sadness, and pursued with the fear of God's judgments, he one day left his home to go he knew not whither, when he happened to cast his eyes on a poor man close to his gate, who was apparently in extreme misery. On beholding him, he was deeply affected, and calling to mind the promise of our Lord, that he would regard as done to himself whatever should be done to the least of his disciples, he took the poor man into his house and bestowed upon him a bountiful alms. Then, as if he had been in the very presence of Jesus Christ, whom his faith taught him to recognise and honour in the person of this beggar, he threw himself at his feet and exclaimed, "O Lord Jesus, I wish to give you my heart, but it is so stained with crimes that I dare not present it. Accept at least the alms I have offered for thy love and convert me." This humble prayer was so powerful with God that the sinner's heart was softened, and he began to weep bitterly for his sins, becoming from that moment a sincere penitent. Thus did God reward his lively faith and his humble charity.—*Histoires Edifiantes.*

6. *Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God. The clean of heart*, my dear children, are those who are pure and innocent, who tremble at the thought of sin, who carefully guard their senses and

* Matt. xxv., &c.

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ever watch and pray against temptation. Such was St. Aloysius, who would not so much as fix his eyes on a person of the other sex; such too was St. Stanislaus of Kostka, whose presence was sufficient to restrain among his schoolmates every unbecoming word. *Blessed*, indeed, are such, *for they shall see God!* And when? Not only hereafter in heaven, but in a certain sense even here upon earth, since God loves to communicate himself to the pure and innocent. He speaks to them in the interior of their hearts, and they know and hear his voice; he shows himself to them in his works, and they recognise everywhere the presence and the hand of God. They are the favourites of God—his little children, whom he leads by the hand and carries at the breast.* Oh, how good a thing it is to love purity, and to keep both soul and body innocent and undefiled!

7. *Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.* These words show how dear to God is the cause of peace, since our Lord pronounces those *blessed* who promote it, and declares that they are the true *children of his heavenly Father*. Now peace is of two kinds. It was to establish peace between God and man that our Blessed Lord came upon earth and died on the cross, hence he is the greatest of peacemakers, and for this reason is called in Holy Scripture the "Prince of Peace."† But he wishes us to have peace not only with God, but also with one another. For this reason he prayed for his disciples that they might be one, as he and his Father are One,‡ and left them as his last legacy the gift of peace. "Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you." § Whoever, therefore, promotes this twofold peace by converting the sinner to God, and by healing or preventing quarrels and

* Is. lxvi. 12, 13. † Is. ix. 6. ‡ John xvii. 11.
§ I. John xiv. 27.

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dissensions among men, inherits this blessing, and shows himself to be a true disciple of Jesus and child of God.

8. Finally, *Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake*, that is, in the cause of religion or virtue. Foremost among those who inherit this blessing is the glorious band of martyrs, who in all ages, from the time of the Apostles even to the present day, have freely shed their blood amid cruel torments, and laid down their lives in defence of their faith, or for the fulfilment of their duty to God. *Blessed are they*, for by short and fleeting sufferings they have entered into the eternal possession of a heavenly kingdom—*theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* But it is not the martyrs only who share in this beatitude: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus," says the Apostle, "shall suffer persecution."* Every good man has something to endure from the calumny, violence, or injustice of others. Let him, then, whatever he suffers, whatever sacrifices he has to make, esteem it, as the Apostles did, a great happiness to suffer something for the name of Jesus. And why? Because thereby he can give to our Blessed Lord the most convincing proof of his love, and by momentary and trifling afflictions purchase eternal rewards. "Blessed are ye," says our Lord, "when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."†

CALUMNY NOBLY ENDURED AND INNOCENCE VINDICATED.

While St. Vincent of Paul was on one occasion upon a visit to Paris, he happened to lodge in the same house and apartment with a certain magistrate, who was a native of the same province as himself. One morning when St. Vincent was sick in bed, his friend went out, leaving a large sum of money

* II. Tim. iii. 12. † Matt. v. 11, 12.

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in a cupboard which he had forgotten to lock. Upon his return he found the money gone, and blinded by passion, he immediately accused St. Vincent of the theft. The Saint answered calmly, that he had not taken it, nor had he seen any one else do so. The magistrate stormed and raged, insisted on St. Vincent making up the loss, and at length drove him from the house, proclaiming him everywhere as a thief and impostor. He even went so far as to accuse him of the robbery in presence of a distinguished assembly of ecclesiastics. St. Vincent endured this public insult in silence, and contented himself with saying, "God knows the truth."

At length, after the space of six years, the real culprit was taken up for another crime in a distant part of the country, and, by the disposal of Divine Providence, was brought before the very magistrate whom he had robbed in Paris. He then confessed, that being employed by a druggist to carry some medicine to St. Vincent, he had, when the latter was not looking, abstracted the purse from the cupboard. He added that his knowledge that the crime was laid to the charge of the Saint had always caused him the most bitter remorse, and that he acknowledged the Justice of God, which had at length overtaken him. Great too was the remorse of the magistrate at the thought of what St. Vincent had had to endure from his unjust suspicions; nor did he lose a moment in writing to him to acknowledge his fault, and humbly implore his forgiveness.

St. Vincent, in relating this incident for the instruction of his young ecclesiastics, concluded in these words, "Let us, my dear brethren, judge ourselves deserving of all the evil that can be said against us, and leave to God the task of manifesting the secrets of hearts."—*Life of St. Vincent of Paul.*

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SEVENTEENTH INSTRUCTION.

The Seven Deadly Sins and Contrary Virtues. The Sins against the Holy Ghost. The Sins that cry to Heaven for Vengeance.

Q. Say the Seven Deadly Sins.

A. Pride,		Humility,
Covetousness,		Liberality,
Lust,	Contrary Virtues.	Chastity,
Anger,		Meekness,
Gluttony,		Temperance,
Envy,		Brotherly Love,
Sloth.		Diligence.

We come now to speak of *the Seven Deadly Sins* and *the Virtues opposed to them*. These sins are called *deadly*, because, if indulged in, they will sooner or later bring death to the soul. They are also called the *Capital Vices*, because they are the chief wicked habits which defile the soul of man, and from which all other vices spring. Each of these deadly sins is opposed to some particular virtue, which is called the Contrary Virtue. These *Contrary Virtues* are therefore also seven in number, and are the parents of many others.

1. First among the Deadly Sins comes *Pride*, to which is opposed the virtue of *Humility*. Pride, my dear children, is *an excessive self-esteem*. The proud man always thinks well of himself and despises others; moreover, he attributes to himself whatever good there is, or that he thinks there is in him, thereby robbing God, from whom all good proceeds, of that glory which is his due. It is in this that the heinousness of Pride consists, it is both a *lie* and a *theft*, and *that* committed against God himself; for

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the proud man denies to God the merit of his gifts, and robs him of the glory belonging to the Giver, and of which God is most jealous—"My glory I will not give to another,"* saith the Lord. This it was which made the sin of the fallen Angels so great. Led on by Pride they refused to give to God the homage due to him, and desired to usurp his glory to themselves, Our first parents also fell by Pride—they wished to have the knowledge of good and evil, and become like Gods. So that you see Pride is the mother of all sin. "From Pride all perdition took its beginning."†

If Pride was the beginning of all evil, *Humility* is the mother of every virtue. Humility is the contrary of Pride. The proud man looks upon himself as something great, and attributes all that he has good to himself—the humble man esteems himself as nothing, and refers the glory of all that he has and all that he does to God alone. The proud man considers it his right to be esteemed and honoured—the humble man knows that he is in himself deserving of no esteem or honour, and, consequently, is quite content when he is neglected, slighted, or despised. It was by the practice of the most sublime Humility that our Blessed Lord sought to heal in us the deadly wound inflicted by Pride. Though God of heaven and Lord of all, "he emptied himself," says the Apostle, "taking the form of a servant," and "humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross."‡ Yes, my dear children, to teach us Humility, he chose among all deaths that which was esteemed the most infamous, namely, the death of the cross, dying between two notorious malefactors, as if he had been the worst criminal of the three.

* Is. xlii. 8. † Tob. iv. 4. ‡ Phil. ii. 7, 8.

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If you read attentively the history of the Old and New Testaments, you will find abundant examples to show you the hatefulness of Pride, and the excellence of the virtue of Humility. You will see there the history of Nabuchodonosor, who was so puffed up with his victories and his greatness as to look on himself almost as a god*—of Aman, the haughty minister of Assuerus, who, furious at the refusal of Mardochai to bend the knee before him, planned the destruction of the whole Jewish nation†—of Sennacherib, who blasphemously declared that the Living God could not save his people, or resist the power of his arm.‡ How detestable their Pride was in the sight of God, may be judged by the awful punishments which befell them. Nabuchodonosor, deprived of his royal power and his reason, was condemned for seven years to eat grass like an ox. Aman was hung on the gibbet which he had prepared for Mardochai. The mighty host of Sennacherib was cut off by the sword of an Angel, and he himself, flying in disgrace, was shortly afterwards murdered by his two sons. Truly were those words of the Holy Ghost fulfilled in them, that "God resisteth the proud,"§ that "he hath put down the mighty from their seat,"‖ that "he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart."¶

Behold, on the other hand, that perfect model of Humility, the Blessed Virgin Mary. All the wonderful graces which she has received she attributes entirely to the Goodness of God, who, she says, "hath regarded the humility," that is the lowliness "of his handmaid."** *Therefore*, she adds, hath God exalted her, and all generations shall call her Blessed. See the humble publican "standing afar off" in the temple, and striking his breast saying, "O God, be

* Dan. iv. † Esth. iii. ‡ Paralip. xxxii. § Jas. iv. 6.
‖ Luke i. 52. ¶ Luke v. 51. ** Luke i. 48.

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merciful to me a sinner;" and he went down to his house justified, says our Blessed Lord, rather than the Pharisee.* Or listen to St. Peter, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man;"† and to the centurion, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof"‡—the one was made by our Lord his vicar upon earth, the other received the cure of his servant which he had come to ask. Ah, my dear children, how dear to the heart of Jesus is the virtue of Humility, and how certain to draw down the abundant blessings of heaven on those who practice it! "God resisteth the proud," says our Blessed Lord himself, "but to the humble he giveth grace."§

WHO BROKE THE DISHES?

In a certain monastery of Egypt there lived a monk, named Eulalius, who was remarkable for the perfect practice of the virtue of humility. Living in the same community were several negligent and lukewarm monks, who finding that Eulalius was never in the habit of excusing himself, made it a practice, whenever they committed a fault or broke any of the kitchen utensils, to lay the blame on *him*, in order that the punishment might be shifted from their own shoulders. On these occasions the superiors often rebuked Eulalius severely; but he, instead of pleading his innocence, would cast himself at their feet and beg pardon for all his past negligence. Sometimes the penances laid upon him were so numerous, that he had to pass two or three days together without eating. At length, fresh faults being continually laid to his charge, the elder religious represented to the Abbot that, as they found no amendment in Eulalius, it would be necessary to adopt severe measures, "otherwise," said they, "all the plates and dishes of the monastery will be broken, and there will be no keeping anything whole in the house." The Abbot requested time for deliberation, and while recommending the matter earnestly in prayer to God, he learnt by Divine inspiration the innocence and extraordinary sanctity of Eulalius. The same was afterwards

* Luke xviii. 9, &c. † Luke v. 8. ‡ Luke vii. 6.
§ I. Pet. v. 5.

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manifested to the brethren by a miracle, which happened in the sight of the whole community. The esteem in which Eulalius was now held by the monks became so painful to him, that he withdrew from the monastery into a lonely cave in the desert, where he spent the remainder of his days in solitude, unknown to man, and far away from the dangers of human applause.—*Science of the Saints.*

FALSE HUMILITY.

A stranger monk having come to visit the holy Abbot Serapion, the latter out of respect for his visitor, begged him to give out the prayer which they were accustomed to recite on such occasions. His visitor excused himself, saying that he was a poor sinner, and unworthy to wear the religious habit. Shortly after, the Saint offered to wash his feet, according to their pious custom, but he would by no means permit him, alleging his great unworthiness. St. Serapion accordingly entertained him at table with what his cell could afford, and then dismissed him with this charitable advice, "My son, if you wish to make progress in religion, return to your cell, and there, attending to God and yourself, employ yourself in working with your hands; for coming abroad in this manner is not so good for you as it would be to remain at home." At these words signs of displeasure appeared in the face of the monk, his pride not being able to bear a rebuke. Upon which the holy Abbot said, "A little while ago you said that you were a great sinner, unworthy to wear the habit of a monk, and now you are offended at the charitable warning I have given you." At these words the monk entered into himself, and having acknowledged his fault, departed, much edified with the lesson he had received.—*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

2. *Covetousness*, or Avarice, is the inordinate love of riches, and *Liberality*, the virtue opposed to it, is a disposition to make a generous use of earthly goods for the honour of God or the relief of the poor. St. Paul says, that "the desire of money is the root of all evil;"* and, indeed, what is there that is more liable to lead to envy, deceit, violence, injustice,

* I. Tim. vi. 10.

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and many other crimes? Moreover, Covetousness produces great hardness of heart, rendering those who are possessed with it, cruel and unfeeling, not only to the poor, but often to their own relations and even to their very parents. Add to this, that it renders the mind restless, anxious and suspicious; for the covetous man is ever tormented with the fear of losing or the desire of gaining. We must always be on our guard, my dear children, against this hateful and contemptible vice, which is the fruitful source of so many evils, and we should be the more watchful because it is apt to grow upon people without their perceiving it, especially in proportion as they acquire wealth and advance in years. To prevent it gaining possession of our hearts, we should exercise ourselves in the opposite virtue of *Liberality*, giving freely according to our means for the support of religion and the relief of the poor. Parents should take every opportunity of promoting this disposition in their children, teaching them from their infancy to be generous to their companions, and to love above all things to relieve our Blessed Lord in the person of his poor; otherwise they will often have the pain of seeing them grow up mean, selfish, and miserly. To encourage their children to this practice, let them remind them that "he that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord,"* and that our Blessed Lord has promised on his own Divine Word that even a cup of cold water given in his name shall not lose its reward.†

We have a terrible example of the fatal consequences of Covetousness in the traitor Judas, who for the sake of a few paltry pieces of silver betrayed his Divine Master into the hands of his enemies.‡ It was the indulgence of the same passion which led the

* Prov. xix. 17. † Matt. x. 42. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 15.

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wicked king Achab into the murder of the innocent Naboth.* On the other hand, it was the Charity of Tobias which obtained for him the visit of the Archangel St. Raphael and so many blessings, both spiritual and temporal.† Again it was the Liberal Hospitality which the woman of Sunam showed to the prophet Eliseus, that merited for her the restoration of her son to life;‡ it was the Generous Alms-deeds of the widow Tabitha, that obtained for herself after death a like favour; § while the Charitable Actions of the centurion Cornelius were rewarded by his own conversion and that of his whole household. ‖ Well does the Wise Man say, "Cast thy bread upon the running waters, for after a long time thou shalt find it again."¶

3. The third among the deadly sins is *Lust*, or Impurity, which is the love of the sinful pleasures of the flesh. Of this vice and the opposite virtue *Chastity*, we have already spoken when treating of the Sixth Commandment.

4. *Anger* comes next with its contrary virtue *Meekness*. Anger is one of the favourite daughters of Pride; for the proud man cannot put up with an injury or affront, but immediately desires to revenge himself. Meekness, on the contrary, ever accompanies Humility, for he who is truly humble, knows that being nothing in himself and having sinned against God, he deserves every kind of ill treatment and contempt. Meekness is one of the special marks of a true disciple of Jesus Christ, and our Blessed Lord tells us that it is one which we must continually strive to learn from his own example, "Learn of me," he says, "because I am meek and humble of heart."** Of Anger we have already spoken under the Fifth Commandment, and of Meekness under the Eight Beatitudes.

* III. Kings xxi. † Tob. i. 19, 20. ‡ IV. Kings iv. 8, &c. Acts ix. 36, &c. ‖ Acts x. 4. ¶ Eccles xi. 1. ** Matt. xi. 29.

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5. *Gluttony*, which includes Drunkenness, is the inordinate love of eating and drinking. *Temperance*, as the virtue opposed to Gluttony, is a due restraint over our appetites in this respect. The glutton, or the drunkard, is like a beast of the field, a slave to his own appetites, for he is led by them rather than by reason or the Law of God. In fact he makes a God of his belly, as the Apostle says,* living as if the whole end of his being was to fill himself with food or drink. The consequence is, that his mind becomes darkened, his will corrupted, and his heart hardened against the grace of God. Of the terrible fruits of Drunkenness in particular I need hardly speak, for you have them daily before your eyes. Everywhere you see homes made desolate, wives and children starving and naked, the most horrible crimes committed, and sinners brought to a miserable and untimely end through the means of this accursed sin. Truly might it be said, that with desolation is our whole land made desolate through the fatal vice of intemperance. Ah, my dear children, pray earnestly to God that you may never be so unhappy as to become victims to this vice, and in order that you may be preserved from the danger of falling into it, practice throughout life continual *Temperance*, or moderation in your eating and drinking. Deny yourselves now in little things, and you will acquire that command over yourselves which, with God's grace, will enable you to stand firm in after life against greater temptations. Listen to the following history, and you will learn what danger St. Monica ran, through self indulgence in her early youth, of falling into the sin of intemperance, and how Almighty God made use of a servant maid to correct her.

* Phil. iii. 19.

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ST. MONICA AND THE SERVANT MAID.

St. Monica, the mother of the great St. Augustine, was brought up under the care of a virtuous nurse, who earnestly endeavoured to train her in habits of self-denial as well as other virtues. Thus, among other excellent practices, she would never allow the little Monica to drink between meals, saying to her, "*Now* you only want a drink of water; but, when you grow up and are mistress of the cellar, you will not care for water, though the habit of drinking will still remain with you."

The very danger which the prudent servant had foreseen actually befell her, for as she grew older her parents frequently entrusted her with the key of the cellar, and sent her to draw the wine for the use of the family. When so doing she would sometimes out of curiosity take a little sip, but by degrees the quantity increased, and she acquired at length such a liking for wine that she would drink whole cupfuls with the greatest relish. Thus did she sow the seeds of the vice of intemperance, and expose herself by her self-indulgence to the danger of grievous excess. Almighty God saw her peril, and mercifully rescued her from the brink of the precipice in the following manner.

It happened one day that the young Monica had some angry words with one of the servants. Now this was the very maid who had been in the habit of accompanying her young mistress to the cellar, and had frequently noticed her fondness for the wine-cup. In her vexation she now reproached St. Monica with her failing, calling her *a young wine bibber*. This expression made the deepest impression on her mistress, who, entering into herself, sincerely deplored her fault, and from that moment entirely corrected it. Thus did her humility in profiting by the rebuke of a servant, lay the foundation of her future sanctity.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

AN INDIAN CHIEF ON DRUNKENNESS.

Father de Smet, the zealous Jesuit Missionary of the North American Indians, praises the tribe of the Ravens for their determined opposition to the use of intoxicating drinks. "What good is this water of fire?" said their chief to the white man who sought to introduce among them the use of ardent spirits. "It burns the throat and the stomach; it renders man like a bear; as soon as he has tasted it, he bites, he grunts, he howls, and ends by falling down like a corpse. Your water of fire does nothing but evil; carry it to our enemies. They will kill each other, and their wives and

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children will be objects of pity. As for us we do not want it, we are mad enough without it."—*Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.*

6. *Envy* comes next among the Seven Capital Vices. It is "sorrow at another's good," which the envious man considers as his own loss. This sin is directly opposed to that precept of Charity which teaches us to love our neighbour as ourselves; hence the contrary virtue to Envy is *Brotherly Love*, which causes us to look upon and seek to promote our neighbour's interests as our own—to rejoice in his joy and grieve in his sorrow, as if the good or the evil had befallen our own selves. To do this is the perfection of Charity, and it is what we should aim at; for the natural selfishness of our nature often makes us blind to everything but our own interests, which disposition, if indulged in, may cause us by degrees to fall victims to the hateful sin of Envy.

7. The vice of *Sloth* is the last of the Deadly Sins. It is a laziness of soul which makes us negligent and lukewarm in the service of God. The slothful man either omits his spiritual duties or puts them off from day to day; and when he does perform them, it is with reluctance and in a careless and negligent manner. He has faith, it is true, but it is a dead faith, because he does not keep it alive by the active performance of good works. Such a state of lukewarmness is most dangerous to the soul, because it dries up Divine grace and exposes us to fall an easy prey to temptation. It is also most displeasing to God, as we see from the message which our Blessed Lord sent by St. John to the Bishop of Laodicea: "I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot, but because thou art lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth."* Closely allied to Spiritual Sloth is a

* Apoc. iii. 15, 16.

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certain laziness of body, which shows itself in an excessive fondness for sleep, a disgust for work, and a love of idleness. It is by indulging these habits of bodily laziness, that people fall by degrees into the deadly sin of Spiritual Sloth.

In order, my dear children, to preserve ourselves from the fatal consequences of this dangerous vice, we must cultivate the opposite virtue of *Diligence*, which is a generous fervour in the service of God. The diligent man is not disheartened by labour or difficulties; he is ever pressing on in the practice of virtue. Continually on his guard against the fatal habit of idleness, he is always engaged in some useful employment, and performs his duties, both spiritual and temporal, with fervour and exactness. Thus he does not bury his talent in the ground like the slothful servant of the Gospel,* but multiplies it by turning every grace and opportunity to good account. Hence at the last day he will not be found sleeping like the foolish but watching like the wise virgins, with his lamp burning in his hand, ready to enter with the spouse into the marriage chamber. †

The seven capital vices, my dear children, are the principal enemies against which the Christian must fight all the days of his life. We must strive particularly against that vice to which we are more commonly tempted, and which is usually called our *predominant* or ruling *passion*. For example, there are some persons who are more inclined to pride, others to anger, others to sloth, &c. Having found out by the careful examination of our conscience and the advice of our confessor which is our greatest enemy, we must wage an unceasing war against it; but at the same time we must not neglect to combat the other vices, for they are like poisonous serpents

* Matt. xxv. 14, &c. † Matt. xxv. 1, &c.

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whose bite is deadly, and any of them may, if neglected, inflict on our souls a mortal wound. This you will understand better from the story which I will now relate to you.

PARABLE OF THE UNFORTUNATE TRAVELLER.

A certain young man in crossing a forest was attacked by a frightful monster, which in shape resembled a lion, but had seven heads like those of a serpent. Rushing at him from beneath a bush where it had been lurking, it raised aloft its seven heads, from each of which darted forth a venomous tongue, which filled the air with horrible hissings. The youth, who was both brave and strong, was not disconcerted. Having no other weapon than a hatchet, which he carried in his waist according to the custom of the country, he drew it forth, and rushed at the savage monster. At the first blow he cut off four of its heads, at the second he struck off other two, and at the third he would certainly have completed his victory by cutting off the remaining head, had not the hatchet unfortunately slipped from his hand and fallen upon the ground. At the same moment the beast, enraged by the wounds it had received, rushed furiously upon him, bit him, stung him, and seized him in its claws. In vain did the unhappy man struggle and call for help, his cries were unheard, and the savage beast dragging him into its den, gave him as food to its young ones.—*Histoires et Paraboles.*

My dear children, can you explain to me this parable? Who is the traveller passing through the forest? It is the Christian journeying through the world on his way to heaven. But a ferocious beast lurks in his path—namely, the devil, whose seven heads are the seven capital sins, whereby he strives to destroy our souls for eternity. Against these heads we must fight unceasingly with the weapons of a Christian. It is not sufficient to cut off six of them; if there is one left, we are undone. Indeed, it is generally one particular vice that is the cause of damnation. Examine yourselves, then, to see whether, in fighting against this infernal monster, you have

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not left him at least one of his heads. Do not weary of the struggle, or let the hatchet slip from your hands; in other words, do not leave off prayer, spiritual reading, your examination of conscience, the frequentation of the Sacraments, and the practice of self-denial, for these are the arms of a Christian, and with these you are sure of victory. Were you to abandon them, there would be every reason to fear that the devil would avail himself of the opportunity to take you unawares and inflict a deadly wound.

Q. Say the sins against the Holy Ghost.

A. 1. Presumption of God's mercy.
2. Despair.
3. Resisting the known truth.
4. Envy at another's spiritual good.
5. Obstinacy in sin.
6. Final impenitence.

The six grievous sins, my dear children, which you have just repeated, are all opposed to one or other of the three Theological Virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity. They are called *Sins against the Holy Ghost*, because they are so contrary to the operations of this Divine Spirit of Love, and place so great an obstacle to the work which he effects by his grace in our hearts.

The first two of these sins, *Presumption* and *Despair*, are opposed to the virtue of Hope. *Presumption* is an excess of Hope, in other words, it is hoping to receive from God what we have no right to expect, or expecting some grace without our taking the proper means to obtain it. Despair, on the contrary, is hoping too little; indeed, it is giving up all hope, and it is especially grievous, inasmuch as it implies a distrust of the Power, the Mercy or the Promises of God. We have already spoken of these two sins in treating of the first commandment.

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Resisting the known truth is a very heinous sin against the virtue of Faith, for as soon as ever we know what God has revealed, we are bound at once to believe and profess it. It is very probable that this is the sin called in Holy Scripture "the blasphemy of the Spirit," of which our Blessed Lord says, that it shall not be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come.* By this our Lord gives us to understand that the obstacle which the sinner places by this sin to the grace of God is so great, that he is seldom, if ever, converted. The Pharisees were guilty of it when they refused to acknowledge the truth of the miracles which our Lord worked before their own eyes, or attributed them to the power of the devil. Those also are guilty of it at the present day who wilfully calumniate and misrepresent our holy religion, or who, stifling the voice of conscience, argue against Catholic doctrines which they know in their hearts to be true. Almighty God usually punishes so great a sin, by withdrawing from such his holy grace, which, if they had corresponded with it, would have enabled them to follow the light which he gave them, and would have brought them to the perfect knowledge and possession of the Truth.

Envy at another's spiritual good is opposed to the second precept of Charity, which teaches us to rejoice at our neighbour's good, whether spiritual or temporal, as if it were our own. It was this sin which was the ruin of Cain—he envied and hated his brother Abel, because the sacrifice of the latter was accepted by God in preference to his own. Envy is also, as we have seen, one of the Seven Deadly Sins, and is the fruitful parent of many crimes.

Obstinacy in sin and the fatal consequence of it, *Final Impenitence*, are opposed to the virtue of

* Matt. xii. 31, 32.

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Charity or the Love of God, for they are a deliberate choosing of sin in preference to the Divine Law, of satan in the place of God. God commands us to love him with our whole hearts, and the sinner obstinately refuses to do so, and perseveres in refusing, even to his last breath. We have a terrible example of these sins in the Jews, who hardened their hearts against our Blessed Lord's sweet invitations, and obstinately refused the grace of conversion which he offered them. How many sinners, also, at the present day, go on obstinately in their sins, hoping for a death-bed repentance, until at last they are overtaken by the just Anger of God, and cut off in the very act of sin, or at least in a state of impenitence.

The lamentable history of King Henry the Eighth, whose rebellion against the Holy See separated England from the Communion of the Church, shows us that the sins against the Holy Ghost are closely connected with one another, and are like so many steps by which satan conducts the soul to the bottom of the abyss.

KING HENRY THE EIGHTH.

Henry, who ascended the throne of England in 1509, had the advantage of a good Catholic education, under the pious Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. So great was the zeal which he manifested for the interests of the Church, that when the arch-heretic Luther began to spread abroad his impious doctrines, he himself published a book in defence of Catholic truth; for which reason he received from the Pope the honourable title of "Defender of the Faith." Lust and pride were the occasion of his fall. Led away by the impure love of a maid of honour, named Anne Boleyn, he sought permission from the Pope to put away his lawful queen Catharine, and marry the object of his guilty passion. Clement VII. firmly refused to sanction so grievous an outrage against justice and the sanctity of the married state; whereupon Henry, whose wicked desires and whose haughty spirit could brook no refusal, took the matter into his own hands, renounced all obedience to the Holy See, declared himself Head of the Church in England, and putting away the innocent

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Catharine, went through a mock marriage ceremony with Anne Boleyn.

Henry's wilful *resistance of the known truth* closed his heart to the voice of Divine grace, and plunged him into fresh crimes, with each of which he became more hardened and *obstinate in sin*. His rebellion against the Holy See was followed by the plunder and suppression of the monasteries, and the cruel persecution of all who refused to sanction his enormous crimes. Among others who fell victims to the tyrant's cruel rage, was the learned and pious Lord Chancellor of England, Sir Thomas More, who, after a long imprisonment, was beheaded for denying the king's spiritual supremacy. A similar fate awaited the saintly and venerable Bishop Fisher, Henry's former tutor, at the advanced age of nearly eighty years. Nor did the guilty partner of his crime, Anne Boleyn, escape the fury of the tyrant, being beheaded by his orders in a fit of jealousy. To her succeeded a third and a fourth wife, the latter of whom was ignominiously dismissed by the lustful tyrant, as his first wife Catharine had been. His fifth queen, Catharine Howard, he soon caused to be beheaded, and he had actually married a sixth, when the Justice of God overtook him, and he is said to have perished miserably in a state of *final impenitence*, a prey to frightful agonies of body, and the still more bitter pangs of fruitless remorse.—*History of England.*

Q. Say the Four Sins crying to heaven for vengeance.
A. 1. Wilful murder.
2. Sodomy.
3. Oppression of the poor.
4. Defrauding labourers of their wages.

These, my dear children, are four terrible crimes, which, as the Holy Scripture declares, cry to heaven for vengeance, and of which we should therefore entertain a special horror. The first named is *Wilful Murder*, on account of which Almighty God declared to Cain that the voice of his brother's blood cried to him from the earth, and that he should therefore be accursed among men.* The next is the sin of *Sodomy*, an unnatural sin of impurity, which brought down from heaven upon the inhabitants of the wicked city of Sodom a rain of fire and brimstone, that blotted

* Gen. iv. 10, 11.

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them out from the face of the earth.* In like manner did God declare to the Jews, by the mouth of his prophets, that their cruel *oppression of the poor*, especially of the widow and orphan, would surely bring down upon them the Divine chastisements; "The Lord," said he, "will not accept any person against a poor man, and he will hear the prayer of him that is wronged." And again, "The widow's tears run down the cheek—from the cheek they go up even to heaven."† And finally, as to *defrauding labourers of their wages*, Almighty God announced to the Jews that the hire of the labourers who had reaped their fields, and which by fraud had been kept back, cried out to him, and that the cry had entered into his ears.‡ My dear children, let us detest these hateful crimes which God himself so much abhors, and which are so certain to draw down his signal vengeance.

EIGHTEENTH INSTRUCTION.

The Nine Ways of participating in the Sins of others. The Eminent Good Works. The Evangelical Counsels. The Four Last Things to be remembered.

Q. Are we ever answerable for the sins of others?

A. Yes; as often as we are the cause of their sins through our own fault.

Q. In how many ways may this happen.

A. In nine ways:

1. By counsel.
2. By command.
3. By consent.
4. By provocation.
5. By praise or flattery.
6. By concealment.
7. By partaking.
8. By silence.
9. By defence of the ill done.

* Gen. xviii. 20, &c. † Ecclus. xxxv. 16—19. ‡ Jas. iv. 6.

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I have already told you, my dear children, in speaking of the sin of scandal, which is forbidden by the fifth commandment, that we are strictly answerable for the sins of others *as often as we are the cause of them through our own fault.* I also showed you that there is a great difference between being the *occasion* of a person's sin through his happening to follow our bad example, and being the *cause* of it by our having induced him to commit it.* If we are only the *occasion* of our neighbour's sin we shall have, indeed, to answer to God for the bad example we have given, but we are not strictly guilty of the crime which our neighbour commits, because it is entirely his own act and deed. The case is different when we are the *cause* of his sin, namely, by our having actually prevailed on him to commit it. Then it becomes *our* act as well as *his*, inasmuch as we are the prime movers of it. And thus we become answerable in the sight of God not only for the *guilt* of the sin, but also for all the *consequences* which it is calculated to produce:

We come now to consider the different ways in which we may be guilty of this worst kind of scandal. They are nine in number.

1. *By counsel*, that is, by advising a person to commit a sin, and thus inducing him to consent to it. The false prophet Balaam was guilty of this when he counselled the Moabites to send their women into the camp of the Israelites, in order to corrupt them.†

2. *By command*, that is, when we induce others to sin by orders or threats. Herod sinned in this way when he issued a decree for the massacre of the Holy Innocents; so also did Pilate when he sentenced our Blessed Lord to death.

3. *By consent*, namely, when we permit or agree

* See Vol. II. p. 198. † Jude i. 11. Numb. xxv. 1, &c.

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to the commission of sin. Parents, for example, sin in this way when they allow their children to stay away from Mass without good reason, and servants when they let people pilfer what is placed in their charge. The Apostle St. Paul sinned in this manner before his conversion, when he kept the garments of those who were stoning St. Stephen, and so "was consenting to his death." *

4. *By provocation,* that is, by provoking others, or exciting their passions so as to induce them to commit sin. Thus boys often make others angry by ridiculing or calling them names; and there are many who excite their neighbour to bad thoughts by wicked words or actions. The Pharisees were guilty of our Lord's death, both by *counsel* and *provocation,* when they stirred up the angry passions of the people, and induced them to cry out, "Let him be crucified, let him be crucified." †

5. *By praise or flattery;* for whoever induces another to sin by praising him or flattering his vanity, is really the cause of his guilt. For example, if a boy encourages another to fight or to steal, by telling him that he is a brave or a clever fellow, he sins in this way. The courtiers of king Darius did the same, when they extolled his power and greatness, and advised him to pass a decree that no one for thirty days should offer any prayer, except to the king. Thus by their lying flatteries they induced him to commit a great act of impiety.‡

6. *By concealment,* namely, when we induce others to sin by helping to cover the crime, for instance, by sheltering the criminal, concealing the stolen goods, &c. Saul sinned in this way when he encouraged the witch of Endor to exercise her magic arts under the promise of strict secrecy.§

* Acts vii. 59. † Matt. xxvii. 20—23. ‡ Dan. vi. 7.
§ I. Kings xxviii. 10.

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7. *By partaking*, that is, sharing in the fruits of crime, and so inducing others to sin more readily. King Achab sinned in this manner, by his willingness to take possession of Naboth's vineyard, which caused his wicked wife, Jezabel, to set about plotting the murder of an innocent man.

8. *By silence*, namely, when we do not interfere to stop a sin which it is our duty and in our power to prevent. Parents who do not chastise their children when they see them pilfering or going into bad company, or when they hear them cursing or swearing, sin in this way. We have a striking example of this sin and its punishment in the history of the high priest Heli, who was severely reproved and chastised by God, "because he knew that his sons did wickedly, and did not chastise them." *

9. Finally we sin *by defence of the ill done*, when we encourage others to sin, by standing up for them and trying to justify their wicked actions. The Jews in the desert sinned in this way when they supported the rebellion of Core, Dathan and Abiron, thereby rendering them more obstinate in resisting Moses and Aaron.†

These, my dear children, are the nine ways in which we become not only guilty of the sins of others, but also answerable for the *consequences* of those sins. Hence arises the necessity of restitution, if the sin, which we have thus caused to be committed, has inflicted any injury on our neighbour, either in person or character. The nature and extent of this obligation of restitution, I have already explained in treating of the seventh and eighth commandments.

Q. Say the Three Eminent Good Works.

A. Prayer, Fasting and Alms-deeds.

* I. Kings iii. 13, &c. † Numb. xvi.

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The Three Good Works here mentioned are called *eminent*, because they are distinguished among all others for their excellence and for the precious fruits which they produce in the soul. To converse with Almighty God by *Prayer* is at the same time the greatest of privileges, and a most powerful means of obtaining grace. "Ask, and it shall be given you," says our Blessed Lord, "seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you."* And again, "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my Name, that I will do."† As to *Fasting*, it is, as we see from the history of the Ninivites, a certain means of appeasing the Anger of God, provided that it be performed with proper dispositions; but it is no less precious as a help towards obtaining the victory over our appetites and passions.

And finally, what is there that is more frequently recommended and more highly extolled in Holy Scripture than the practice of *Alms-deeds*, by which we minister to Jesus Christ himself in the person of his poor, and secure from him a favourable sentence at the day of Judgment? It is, however, in the union of these three most excellent works, animated as they must be by the love of God, that the true treasure of a Christian consists, according to the words of the Archangel St. Raphael, "Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold."‡

As we have already spoken of each of these three good works in a former part of the Catechism, we will go on to the next question.

Q. Say the Evangelical Counsels.

A. Voluntary Poverty, perpetual Chastity and entire Obedience.

* Matt. vii 7. † John xiv. 13. ‡ Tob. xii. 8.

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The three *Evangelical Counsels*, my dear children, are three excellent pieces of advice given us by our Blessed Redeemer in the Holy Gospel. They are called *Counsels*, because he has only *advised* us, and not *commanded* us to follow them; hence they are not of strict obligation, but are simply recommended by our Blessed Lord as a means of greater perfection.

The first of these Counsels is *Voluntary Poverty*, that is, poverty embraced of our own accord for the love of Jesus Christ. This advice was given by our Blessed Lord to the rich young man, who came to ask him what he must do to have everlasting life. First of all, he told him that he must keep the commandments; but when the young man said that he *had* always kept them, our Lord added, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me." * On hearing this, the young man went away sad; he did not take our Lord's advice, for his heart was too much attached to his worldly goods. The Apostles, on the other hand, generously abandoned all things to follow our Lord: "Behold," said St. Peter, "we have left all things, and have followed thee, what therefore shall we have?" To which our Lord made answer, "Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath left house, or brethren, or father, or mother, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall possess life everlasting." † From this we see how great will be the reward of those, who voluntarily embrace a state of holy poverty for the love of Jesus Christ.

* Matt. xix. 16—21. † Matt. xix. 29.

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THE MONKS AND THE BAG OF MONEY.

A certain charitable gentleman, having gone to visit a community of hermits in the deserts of Egypt, took with him a bag of money, which he gave to the Superior, desiring him to distribute it among the religious. The Superior told him that they had no need of it; but the gentleman, seeing that they had to labour hard for their subsistence, insisted so earnestly, that at length the Abbot took the bag, and emptied the money into a basket, which he placed at the church door. Soon after, the signal was given for the Divine Office, and the monks, according to their custom, repaired to the church to assist at it. The Superior stood at the porch, and as they came near to the basket, cried out with a loud voice, "If any man wants, let him take what he wants." There was not, however, a single one who put his hand in the basket; indeed, the greater number did not so much as look at it. Whereupon the Superior said to the gentleman, "Our Blessed Lord has accepted your offering; but take back your money, and give it to those who are really in need." At these words, the stranger departed, much edified at the spirit of poverty displayed by these fervent religious.—*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

By *Perpetual Chastity*, my dear children, we mean a single or unmarried life, embraced for the love of God. This is commonly called the state of holy virginity, and it is highly extolled in the Sacred Scripture as a far more perfect state than that of marriage, though marriage is indeed blessed by God and raised to the dignity of a Sacrament. Of the state of virginity, our Lord says that it is not intended for all, but for those who receive a special call and a special grace for the purpose. "All men take not the word," says he, "but they to whom it is given. He that can take it, let him take it." * And St. Paul speaks to the same effect. "Concerning virgins," he says, "I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give counsel—to be faithful." † And again, "I would that all men were even as

* Matt. xix. 11, 12. † I. Cor. xv. 25.

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myself," that is, unmarried, "but every one hath his proper gift from God." * From which we may conclude that those who are called by God to the holy state of virginity, receive in that call a special mark of the Divine favour, and will also, if they correspond with this grace, have special helps from God, to fulfil the obligations of so holy a state. Finally, we are assured by the Holy Spirit in the Apocalypse, that those who observe faithfully this counsel shall enjoy a special reward hereafter, namely, that they shall sing a new canticle which none of the other Saints can sing, and that they shall be ever near to our Divine Lord, for they "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." †

The third and last of the Evangelical Counsels is *Entire Obedience*, which is a voluntary giving up of one's own will to the guidance and direction of a superior. Our Blessed Redeemer has conveyed this counsel to us by his own example, for though the Lord of all, he became obedient to his own creatures, Mary and Joseph, being subject to them for thirty years in all the affairs of daily life. The Apostles followed in the footsteps of their Divine Master, attaching themselves to him as his disciples, and following his guidance in all things; wherefore they were exalted by our Lord and made the Princes of his heavenly court. And are there any now, my dear children, who practise this counsel? Yes, the members of all religious orders, both monks and nuns, all of whom, to imitate more perfectly the example of our Blessed Lord, make a vow or solemn promise to God of observing not only strict poverty and perpetual chastity, but also of giving up their own will in all things to that of their religious superiors, according to the rules of their respective orders.

* I. Cor. xv. 7. † Apoc. xiv. 3, 4.

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Thus it is those very monks and nuns, who are so little understood by men, and so calumniated by heretics, that are now found almost alone in this wicked world to fulfil not only the commands, but even the counsels of their Divine Master. *They* are, therefore, his most perfect disciples, his most faithful followers, who are now indeed despised by worldly men, but at the last day will be glorified before the world, and exalted by God as his chosen friends and favourites.

ENTIRE OBEDIENCE PRACTISED ON A THRONE.

St. Henry, Emperor of Germany, visiting one day a certain monastery, experienced an ardent desire of quitting his throne, and devoting the remainder of his days to the penitential and religious exercises of the cloister. He accordingly requested an interview with the Abbot, and earnestly besought him to receive him among the number of his religious. The Abbot knowing well the Emperor's saintly life, and the piety and wisdom with which he exercised his government, formed the following plan to satisfy to some degree his pious desires, without withdrawing him from a position which he occupied with so much advantage to religion. Having assembled the monks in solemn chapter, he questioned the Emperor in their presence as to whether, like them, he was ready to practise entire obedience until death, according to the rule and example of Jesus Christ. The Emperor replied that this was his earnest desire, upon which the Abbot said, "From this moment I receive you among the number of my monks, and charge myself with the care of your soul, if you on your part promise to observe faithfully whatever I enjoin you." Henry replied that he would do so. "Then," said the Abbot, "I order you to resume the government of the empire entrusted to you by God, and to promote as far as you can the salvation of the subjects committed to your charge." The Emperor was grieved at this unexpected command; nevertheless he obeyed, and thus had the merit of exercising the evangelical counsel of Obedience, though seated on the throne of a mighty empire.—*Anecdotes Chretiennes.*

Q. Say the Four Last Things to be remembered.

A. Death, Judgment, Hell, Heaven.

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The *Four Last Things* that will come to pass, and which we should bear in constant remembrance, are *Death*, *Judgment*, *Hell* and *Heaven*. The continual recollection of these great truths is, at the same time, a powerful inducement to the practice of virtue, and a sure preservative against sin, according to the words of the Wise Man, "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." *

First of all, *Death*. People try to banish Death from their thoughts, but what folly! We *must* die, and on the manner of our death depends eternity—a happy eternity, or a miserable eternity. Let us, then, think of Death now, that we may be ready for it when it comes upon us. The very words *death*, a *coffin*, a *grave*, a *shroud*, if called to mind in moments of temptation, will often be sufficient to open our eyes, and preserve us from the commission of sin, and the consequent danger of dying in that unhappy state. We know not, indeed, when death will come upon us, nor the particular circumstances that will accompany it, for the time, the place, and the manner of our death are hidden from our eyes; but this we *do* know, for our Lord himself has told us, that death will probably come when we least expect it, "At what hour you think not the Son of Man will come." † Wherefore he warns us to be always ready, *with loins girt and lamps burning in our hands*, like unto servants who are awaiting the return of their master from a marriage feast, that "when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants," he adds, "whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister to them," ‡ in other words, he will communicate to them the

* Ecclus. vii. 40. † Luke xii. 40. ‡ Luke xii. 35—37.

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ineffable delights of the Heavenly Banquet in the kingdom of heaven.

If you read the Lives of the Saints, my dear children, you will find many instances in which the thought of Death was the means of a soul's conversion from a worldly or sinful life to a life of perfect virtue. The following history will show you the power which this reflection exercised upon St. Francis Borgia.

DEATH MAKES NO DISTINCTION.

The holy Duke of Gandia, St. Francis Borgia, while in the world, occupied a high position at the court of the Emperor Charles V., of Spain, and was particularly attached by him to the service of the Empress Isabella. On the occasion of her death, which happened in 1539, he was deputed to attend the body to Granada, where it was to be interred. Upon his arrival at that city, the coffin was uncovered, in order that Francis might certify on oath that it was indeed the body of the late Empress. But, behold! the countenance was to be no longer recognised, so hideous and disfigured was it by the ravages of death; while at the same time there issued from the corpse so frightful a stench that the spectators made haste to depart. Whereupon Francis cried out, "What is become of those eyes once so sparkling? Where is now the beauty and graceful air of that countenance which we so lately beheld? Are *you* her sacred majesty, Donna Isabella? Are *you* my Empress, my lady, my mistress? Thus, then," said he to himself, "end the greatness and the royal dignities of the world! Henceforth I will serve a master who can never die." From that moment he consecrated himself to the love of Jesus crucified, making a vow to become a religious, should his wife die before him. This vow he afterwards fulfilled, by entering into the Society of Jesus, then lately founded by St. Ignatius Loyola.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

After death comes *Judgment*—the Particular Judgment which immediately follows Death, and the General Judgment which will take place at the end of the world. Then it is, that we shall be called upon to give a strict account not only of our words and

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deeds, but even of our secret thoughts. Then shall we have to answer for the graces we have abused, the opportunities we have neglected, the duties we have omitted, and also for the sins which we have committed ourselves, as well as those for which we are answerable, through the scandal we have given to others. And then, too, will the final sentence be pronounced upon us—that irrevocable sentence which will decide our fate for eternity. Ah! my dear children, how is it possible that we can sin, if we call to mind that terrible Judgment which is so swiftly approaching, and which is, as it were, continually hanging over us?

DAMOCLES AND THE SWORD.

There lived at the court of Dionysius, king of Syracuse, a certain youth, named Damocles, who beholding the power, the splendour, the riches, and the various enjoyments of his royal master, was wont often to exclaim, "Never was man so blessed as Dionysius." His words were carried to the king, who wishing to show the youth the emptiness of that which he coveted, invited him to a royal banquet. Damocles eagerly accepted the invitation, and on arriving was treated with royal honours. He was invited to repose on a golden couch, overlaid with rich coverings of inestimable value. Before him was a table spread with viands and liquors of the choicest kinds; beautiful slaves in splendid habits stood around, only awaiting the signal to serve him; the most exquisite perfumes filled the apartment with the sweetest odours, while delicious music was heard at a little distance. Damocles, in raptures of delight, thought himself the happiest of mortals, until he happened accidentally to cast his eyes to the ceiling, from which he observed suspended, by a single hair, a sharp two-edged sword, the point of which rested immediately above his head. In a moment all his raptures vanished, a cold perspiration instantly bedewed his limbs, and his eyes, regardless of every other object, saw nothing but the weapon suspended over him, which threatened every moment to pierce him in its fall. Trembling with fear, he begged permission to retire, and never after did he envy the happiness of Dionysius, exposed to the innumerable dangers which surround a throne.—*Mrs. Herbert.*

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My dear children, in the midst of our daily duties and enjoyments we should give a thought from time to time to that terrible Judgment, which, like the sword of Damocles, is suspended continually over our heads. Let us remember, however, that the Judgment is only terrible to the wicked, and not to those who, by truly loving God and keeping his commandments, ensure for themselves on that day a favourable sentence.

The Judgment follows Death, but what follows the Judgment? *Hell* or *Heaven*—eternal punishment or everlasting happiness. If we are found at death with a single mortal sin upon our souls, unrepented and unforgiven, we shall be condemned for ever to endless torments, in company with satan and his wicked angels. If, on the other hand, we are found in the grace of God, we shall, after we are purified from lesser stains, and have fully paid the debt of temporal punishment which we owe to God's Justice, be admitted to the company of the Blessed, and the possession of God himself, in a word, to all the joys and delights of the Heavenly Paradise. When tempted to sin, let us think of this, and say to ourselves, "Shall I, for a momentary gratification, deprive myself of an eternity of happiness, and condemn myself to an eternity of woe? *

The holy virgin, St. Teresa, has left us in writing a description of some of the torments of hell which God permitted her to behold along with the place prepared for herself, had she unhappily given way to a worldly and sinful life. Though no tongue can express, or words convey to the mind, all that the damned endure in that place of torments, yet the little that has been recorded by the Saint is well calculated to strike terror into the soul, and to inspire

* For further explanation of the Judgment, Hell and Heaven, see the Instructions in Vol. I. on the Seventh and Twelfth Articles of the Creed.

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us with a wholesome dread of mortal sin, which alone can conduct us into that abode of endless woe.

ST. TERESA'S VISION OF HELL.

"Our Lord was pleased that one day while in prayer, I should find myself, though I could not tell how, suddenly lodged in a place in hell. It lasted but a short space of time, but if I should live for many years I could never forget it. The entrance seemed to be a long close passage, or rather like a low dark and narrow oven. The ground seemed to be like mire, exceedingly filthy, of a horrible smell, and full of a multitude of loathsome vermin. At the end of it was a certain hollow place, like a kind of little press in a wall, into which I found myself thrust and closely pent up. Now though all that I have just said was far more terrible than I have described it, yet it might be looked upon as delightful in comparison with what I felt while I was in the press. For this torment was so dreadful, that no words can express the least part of it. I felt a kind of fire in my soul which I am not able to describe. The almost insupportable torments which I have endured by the shrinking up of my sinews and in other ways, were all nothing at all in comparison with what I suffered here, joined to the dismal thought that it was to be without end or intermission. And even this itself is little, compared with the continual agony the soul is in—that pressing, that stifling, that bitter anguish, accompanied with inexpressible disgust, so harrowing, yet so hopeless. To say it is a butchering or rendering of the soul, is to say little; here she is her own executioner, and even tears herself to pieces. I saw not who it was that tormented me, but methought I felt myself both burnt and cut in pieces all at once. And in so dreadful a place there was no room for the least hope of a possibility of ever meeting with any comfort or ease; neither was there such a thing as sitting or lying down. Thus was I thrust into this place like a hole in the wall, and these walls, which are also most terrible to the sight, press in upon their prisoner, for everything there chokes and stifles. There is nothing but gross darkness, without the least glimpse of light, and yet I know not how it is, although there is no light, yet one sees everything that can afflict the sight. Afterwards, I had another vision of terrible things, inflicted as punishments for certain vices, which as far as I could judge of them by the sight, seemed to be more hideous than the former."

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"Since that time all seems easy to me, in comparison with one moment of such suffering as I endured there. In short, the torments of this world are no more than a mere picture, and the burning which is felt here, but a trifle in comparison with the fire there. I remained so astonished and amazed at it, and am so even now, though it happened six years ago, that at the very thought of it my blood seems to chill in my veins through fear. And whatever troubles or pains I now suffer, if I do but call to my remembrance what I then endured, immediately all that can be suffered in this world seems to be just nothing."—*Life of St. Teresa.*

NINETEENTH INSTRUCTION.

CHAPTER VIII.—*The Christian's Rule of Life: To hate Sin and to love God. How to obtain God's love. The love of our Neighbour for the sake of God. The love of our Enemies.*

Q. What rule of life must we follow, if we hope to be saved?

A. We must follow the rule of life taught by Jesus Christ.

Q. What are we bound to do by this rule?

A. We are bound always to hate Sin and to love God.

This chapter of the Catechism, my dear children, teaches us by what rules we must form our lives in order to fulfil the end for which God made us, and to attain to eternal life. For God in his Goodness has not left us in ignorance of what we are to do in order to please him, but has sent his Divine Son into the world, not only to die for us and so open to us the gates of heaven, but also to instruct us both by word and example how to arrive at that happy abode. We must, therefore, if we wish to be saved, *follow the rule of life taught us by Jesus Christ.* Now that rule imposes upon us two obligations—we are bound

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by it *always to hate sin and to love God.* It is in these two things that the life of a good Christian consists—in hating, detesting and avoiding sin, and in loving God with our whole heart, and showing forth that love by the fulfilment of his holy will.

Q. How must we hate sin?

A. Above all other evils; so as to be resolved never to commit a wilful sin, for the love or fear of anything whatsoever.

Yes, my dear children, we must hate sin *above all other evils,* for there is no other evil in the world to compare to it. And why so? Because sin is *an offence against God*—an outrage, a rebellion, against a God who is infinitely Holy, infinitely Powerful, infinitely Good and Amiable, against God who is the Lord and Creator of all, and to whom we owe everything, even our very existence. Hence sin is the greatest of evils; the loss of all our goods, the most painful sickness or suffering, or even death itself is a much less evil than the least venial sin. We must, therefore, hate sin above all other evils, and we must hate it *so* sincerely *as to be resolved never to commit a wilful sin for the love or fear of any thing whatsoever.* Into little sins of thoughtlessness or surprise we shall, indeed, sometimes fall, for as the Holy Scripture says, even the "just man shall fall seven times," * but as to *wilful,* deliberate sin, we must be determined to make every sacrifice rather than commit it. Better a thousand times that we should suffer every temporal evil, than wilfully offend in the least tittle, a God so Great, so Holy, and so Worthy of our love.

Q. How must we love God?

A. Above all things, and with our whole heart.

* Prov. xxiv. 16.

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The second rule which Jesus Christ gives us is *to love God*, and this we must do, as the Catechism says, *above all things, and with our whole hearts.* Hence our Blessed Lord says to us in the Holy Scripture, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength." * Those offend against this rule who prefer any creature before God, for example, those who love pleasures, riches and honours more than God, who pursue them more eagerly than they do the service of God, and are ready to offend God, rather than sacrifice any of these things. Others again break this rule by loving friends or kindred—for instance, husband, wife, or children—more than God; so as to be willing for their sakes to offend God, or so as to forget God and neglect his service through an inordinate fondness for them. You see, then, that the love of God does not consist in *saying* that we love him, but in *fulfilling his will* at any cost, and preferring his love and friendship to anything that the world can give. Thus the martyrs were true lovers of Jesus Christ, who when offered by the judges liberty, life, riches and honours, if they would abandon Jesus Christ, chose rather imprisonment, torments and death for his sake. And *we* too, if we are ready to suffer everything rather than offend God, and are willing to bear patiently the trials that God sends us, and to make those sacrifices which he requires from us in the discharge of our duty, show that we indeed truly love God.

The following history will show you how those, who truly love Jesus Christ, are ready to sacrifice all that the world can give and the dearest ties of kindred for his sake.

* Mark xii. 30.

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TRIALS OF ST. PERPETUA.

During the persecution which raged against the Christian religion under the reign of the Emperor Severus, a lady of quality, named Perpetua, with an infant at her breast, was arrested with many others, and cast into a loathsome prison. Among other trials which she had to undergo, the babe that she was nursing was torn from her arms at an age when it most needed its mother's tender care; but though her heart was wrung with anguish, she generously made the sacrifice which God required from her, and committed it with confidence to the keeping of its Heavenly Father.

But the greatest of all the trials which she had to bear was at the hands of her own father, who was still a pagan, and who loved her passionately. Being admitted to have access to his daughter, in order that his entreaties and the sight of his distress might overcome her constancy, he left nothing undone to try to shake her resolution. At one time he would show her his grey hairs and the arms in which he had often carried her; at another he would throw himself at her feet and, embracing her tenderly, implore her to have compassion on him, and not to hasten his death by sacrificing her own life for her religion. The affectionate heart of Perpetua was deeply moved at the sight of the tears and distress of her aged father; but her pain was redoubled when she beheld him beaten with a stick, by order of the judge, in order to drive him from her presence. Her constancy, however, and her fidelity to Jesus Christ continued unshaken; for she remembered the words of our Blessed Lord, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."*

St. Perpetua having, thus by the power of Divine love, triumphed over the feelings of nature, completed her glorious course in the amphitheatre, where she was first tossed by a furious bull, and afterwards beheaded.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

Q. How must we learn to love God?

A. We must beg of God to teach us, "O my God, teach me to love Thee!"

Q. What else must we do?

A. We must often think how good God is; often speak to Him in our hearts; and always seek to please Him.

* Matt. x. 37.

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In order to acquire the gift of Divine Love, which is more precious than all earthly treasures, we must have recourse to God himself, earnestly imploring him to teach us so important a lesson. "*Oh my God*," let us say to him again and again, "*teach me to love thee.*" Or let us repeat that beautiful prayer of St. Ignatius Loyola, "Give me thy love, O Lord, along with thy grace, and I am rich enough, I ask for nothing more." Then let us turn to the Blessed Virgin, whose love for God exceeded that of all other creatures (whence she is often called the "Mother of Beautiful Love"), and let us implore of her to obtain for us from her Divine Son this greatest of all graces. Let us never be weary of asking for the gift of Divine Love, for *it* alone is sufficient to make us Saints. And why so? Because when the Love of God takes possession of a soul, it consumes therein all that displeases him, and brings along with it every other virtue in its train. "For Charity," says the Apostle, "is patient, is kind; Charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil," &c.* Hence, the more we love God, the more perfect we are in his sight, and the greater treasure of merit do we lay up for eternal life.

But it is not sufficient to ask of God the gift of his holy love, we must also correspond with the grace which he will give us, by our earnest endeavours to enkindle this heavenly fire within our breasts. Hence the Catechism says, that *we must often think how good God is, often speak to him in our hearts, and always seek to please him.*

In the first place, *we must often think how Good God is* in Himself—how Beautiful, how Holy, how

* I. Cor. xiii. 4, &c.

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Powerful, how Rich, how Amiable, and in every way how Worthy of our love. Then we should reflect how Good he has ever been to us, how we owe all we have and all we are to his Divine Bounty, how Tender and Merciful he has shown himself, notwithstanding our base ingratitude, how he has ever watched over us with Fatherly Providence, preserving us from so many evils, and each day bestowing fresh favours upon us, finally, what cruel sufferings and what a bitter death his Divine Son has endured for our sakes. Such thoughts as these, frequently and devoutly meditated on, will assuredly light up in our souls the flames of Divine Charity, and excite in us an ardent desire of returning love for love.

Secondly, we should *often speak to God in our hearts.* Friends love to converse with those to whom they are attached, and by doing so their mutual affection is increased. *We* also, if we desire to love God, should frequently converse with him in prayer, whereby the fire of holy Charity will, as the Psalmist tells us,* be enkindled in our hearts. And let us not imagine, my dear children, that God is far from us, or that we have to go to heaven to seek or speak to him—on the contrary, he is everywhere by his Divine Presence, while he dwells especially in the hearts of those who love him. Therefore, all we have to do to find him, is to turn our thoughts to him; it matters not where we may be, at home or in the streets, at play or in school, sitting or walking, or lying in our beds. Wherever we are, we have God with us, and we should speak to him as if we saw him with our eyes before us, reverently and devoutly as to the Great Lord of heaven, but with loving confidence, as a child will speak to a tender and affectionate parent. And what should we say to God?

* Ps. xxxviii. 4.

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We should thank him and bless him for his Goodness, offer him our daily actions, beg of him to help us in our temptations, to assist us to overcome our passions, to grant us all the graces we stand in need of, and especially to give us the great grace of his holy Love. Let us love to speak thus to our Good God, and we shall soon become inflamed with the fire of Divine Charity.

ST. EDMUND AND THE CHILD JESUS.

While St. Edmund, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, was pursuing his studies at Paris, he used frequently to walk in the fields by the river side, in order to meditate on sacred subjects. One day he beheld before him a boy of exceeding beauty, whose countenance was white and ruddy, and who saluted him, saying, "Hail, my beloved!" The stranger then asked Edmund if he did not know him. Edmund replied that he did not remember to have seen him. Upon which the boy exclaimed, "It is strange that you do not know me, for I sit by your side in the schools, and wherever you go, I am with you." He then told Edmund to look at his face and see what was written on his forehead. Edmund looked and read, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.' From that time the holy youth became more and more inflamed with the love of his Redeemer, and devoted himself more than ever to the meditation of his Sacred Passion.—*Cistercian Legends.*

Finally, *we must always seek to please God.* For it is by trying to please him that we both show that we love him, and at the same time increase his love within our hearts. And what can we do to please God, my dear children? In the first place, we can keep his commandments. "This is charity," says St. John, "that we walk according to his commandments." * In the second place, we can perform faithfully and exactly all our different duties, for it is God

* II. John 6.

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who has imposed those duties upon us; hence he cannot fail to be pleased if we discharge them faithfully. Then, again, we can exercise ourselves in acts of charity to our neighbour, for our Blessed Lord tells us he will be as pleased therewith, as if those acts were done to himself in person. And finally, we can bear patiently all the sufferings and trials of life, for nothing will make us so dear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as to take up our cross generously and follow him on the road to Calvary. Thus you see there are many ways of pleasing Almighty God; and the more we try to do so, the more will his holy Love take possession of our souls. For to love God does not require deep learning or great abilities, but only a pure, an humble, and a willing heart.

ST. BONAVENTURE AND BROTHER GILES.

St. Bonaventure, one of the most celebrated Doctors of the Church and General of the Franciscan order, had among his religious a lay brother, named Giles, who had been one of the first companions of St. Francis, and was a man of extraordinary simplicity and innocence of life. Speaking one day to St. Bonaventure, Brother Giles asked him how it was possible for him, ignorant as he was, to make a proper return to God for the many marks of love which he had shown him. "It is easy to do so," said the Saint, "you have only to love God, and there is no one who cannot love him with the help of his grace." "What," said Brother Giles, "can an ignorant man love God more than a learned doctor?" "Certainly," replied St. Bonaventure, "and a good woman can love God even more than the cleverest Theologian." At these words, Brother Giles, transported with joy, ran into the garden and out upon the high road, crying aloud, "Come simple, ignorant men, come good women, come and love our Lord. You can love him as much and even more than Father Bonaventure or the cleverest Theologian." Then falling into a profound meditation, he pondered on the reflection, that all that God regards in us, is the degree of love that we bear him, a thought which overwhelmed his soul with joy and consolation.—*Anecdotes Chretiennes.*

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Q. And does not Jesus Christ teach us also to love one another?

A. Yes; He commands us to love all persons without exception for His sake.

Another rule which our Blessed Lord gives us is *to love all persons without exception for his sake.* Indeed he has told us that this mutual love will ever be the mark of his true disciples—"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another;" * so that if we have it not, we cannot be recognised as real Christians. Moreover, our Blessed Lord has taught us that this charity must be *universal*, so that we must make no distinction of rich or poor, Christian or infidel, acquaintance or stranger, friend or enemy. And why so? Because we are to love our neighbour *for the sake of Jesus Christ*, and He makes no exception, but loves *all* his creatures, and has shed his Blood equally for all. You will remember how he enforces the same lesson in the beautiful parable of the Good Samaritan.

Q. How are we to love one another?

A. By wishing well to all, and praying for all; and never allowing ourselves any thought, word, or deed, to the injury of any one.

The love which we must cherish for our neighbour is not a mere sentiment or feeling, it is an *active* love which shows itself in our desiring and doing all in our power to promote his temporal and eternal happiness. Thus he, who truly loves his neighbour, will always *wish him well;* he will rejoice at his good fortune and grieve at his affliction as if it were his own. Knowing, however, that every good thing proceeds from God, he will earnestly *pray for all,*

* John xiii. 35.

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imploring God to grant them every blessing and every grace. The sincere desire which he has for his neighbour's happiness will make him also watchful over himself, in order that be may never *allow himself any thought, word or deed to the injury or prejudice of any one.* On the contrary, he will strive to the utmost of his power to promote his neighbour's interests, to shield him from hurt or harm, and to render to him every service and assistance that he may require. Such, my dear children, is the character of that charity, which is the mark of the true disciples of Jesus Christ.

Q. And are we also to love our enemies?

A. Yes, we are; not only by forgiving them from our hearts, but also by wishing them well, and praying for them.

From this answer you see that our charity, to be perfect, must embrace even our very *enemies*, and that we must give proof of it doing so, *not only by forgiving them from our hearts* if they have done anything to injure us, *but also by wishing them well, and praying for them.* This is a lesson which our Blessed Lord has distinctly taught us, both by word and example: "I say to you," he says, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust."* He teaches us the same lesson still more forcibly by his own Divine example upon the cross, dying for those who were putting him to death, and with his latest breath begging pardon for his very executioners.

But you will, perhaps, say, "It is easy for me to

* Matt. v. 44, 45.

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love my friends and benefactors; but how is it possible for me to feel fond of those who dislike and injure me?" My dear children, you are right. It is hardly possible for you to feel a fondness for such, though there are many Saints of God who have arrived at such perfection as even to feel a sensible fondness for their enemies. But this is not what Jesus Christ requires from you. Love does not consist in the feelings, but in the will, not in a natural liking for those we love, but in a real desire for their welfare and happiness. If then you pardon your enemies from your heart, wish them well, and pray for them to God, there is no doubt but that you fulfil the precept of loving your enemies, and possess that true charity which is a sure mark that you belong to Jesus Christ.

THE CHINESE EUNUCH AND THE CHRISTIAN WIDOWS.

A certain eunuch who was attached to the Court of the Emperor of China, becoming afflicted with a loathsome disease, was driven from the palace, and having no friends who would receive him, was on the point of perishing from exposure and want. Seeing him in this pitiable state, two poor Christian widows took compassion on him, and though hardly able to provide for their own support, received him into their cottage, dressed his sores, and waited on him with the greatest tenderness, imposing upon themselves additional labour and privations, in order to provide for the expense of his subsistence. At the end of three months, seeing him partly recovered, they ventured to speak to him on the affairs of his soul, and to unfold to him some of the leading truths of the Christian religion. To their grief and astonishment he flew into a passion, loaded them with reproaches, and threatened to denounce them to the persecutors. In fact, he left the house, and did not for some time return, leaving them for a whole month in a state of fear and trembling. At the end of that time, having exhausted all his means, he again had recourse to them for assistance. Forgetting the ingratitude and ill treatment which they had met with at his hands, they received him with the same charity, and waited on him with the same tender care, redoubling, mean-

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while, their prayers for his conversion; whereupon the heart of the pagan was softened. "A religion," said he, "which inspires such conduct, cannot but come from God. Teach me to know and to love the God whom you serve, and to prepare for death, which cannot be far distant." The widows hearing these words were filled with joy and hastened to complete his instruction, after which he was baptised. Not long after he expired in admirable sentiments of piety, glorifying God and blessing his charitable benefactresses.—*Anecdotes Chretiennes.*

TWENTIETH INSTRUCTION.

Other Rules of Life: To deny ourselves, To take up our Cross, To follow Christ. The Virtues we are to learn of him—Meekness, Humilty, Obedience.

Q. What other rules does Jesus Christ give us?

A. To deny ourselves, to take up our cross and to follow him.—*Matt.* xvi. 24.

In this answer, my dear children, we have three other rules, which our Blessed Lord has taught us to enable us better to secure our salvation. He gave them to his Apostles on that occasion when he had been speaking to them of his cruel Passion, and St. Peter had tried to dissuade him from it, saying, "Lord be it far from thee; this shall not be unto thee." Thereupon Jesus rebuked him, telling him that he spoke like a carnal man, who understood not the things of God, nor the advantage to be derived from suffering. Then addressing all his Apostles, he said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." *

* Matt. xvi. 21—25.

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If then we wish to be numbered among the true disciples of Jesus, we must follow these three rules, without the observance of which we cannot hope to *come after* him into his heavenly kingdom.

Q. How are we to deny ourselves?

A. By giving up our own will, and by going against our own humours, inclinations and passions.

First, *we must deny ourselves*, and this we do, as the Catechism says, *by giving up our own will, and going against our own humours, inclinations and passions.* We must *give up our own will*, making God's Will, and not our own, the rule of our lives. In other words, we must not think what we would like ourselves, but what will please God, and what is His Will in our regard. This desire to do God's Will in all things is the perfection of Divine love; nothing pleases God more, and nothing will procure for us a greater reward. Our Blessed Lord has set us an admirable example of this virtue, being entirely united to his Father's Will in all things. "I came down from heaven," he says, "not to do my own will, but the Will of him that sent me."* And again, "My meat is to do the Will of him that sent me."† Now this union with the Divine Will implies the continual giving up of our own will, which is generally opposed to that of God. Hence it requires us to practise a great spirit of self-denial, and to fight constantly *against our own humours, inclinations and passions*, which urge us to gratify our own will rather than submit to the Will of God.

You will ask, perhaps, what we mean by *going against our own humours.* What are our *humours?* Our humours, my dear children, are our own inward

* John vi. 38. † John iv. 34.

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feelings, which are usually manifested by our outward behaviour. Now these humours are of many kinds. There are good humours and bad humours, kind humours and cross humours, gentle humours and angry humours. Then there are proud and sulky humours, and greedy and lazy humours, along with plenty more that are equally disagreeable, for, unfortunately, most of our humours are bad ones. These are what we must *go against*, by trying to shake them off, just as a boy would try to shake off a big black dog that were to put its paws on his shoulders. For example, your mother tells you to go and take your book and learn your lesson. You dont want to learn your lesson, for you would much sooner go out and play, so your face begins to look black and ugly, like faces always do when their owners are vexed. Then, perhaps, you mutter something that no one can understand, and turn about slowly and creep out of the room, or else run out, banging the door or leaving it wide open. And supposing that at last you take your book, you do little good with it, for you only turn over the leaves, or at any rate you waste a deal of time before you learn your lesson. My dear children, what does all this mean? It means that you are in a bad humour, a sulky humour, and a very disobedient humour. Well, then, here is a humour to go against. But how must you go against it? You must try to shake it off by praying against it in your heart, saying, for example, "Jesus and Mary, help me;" then you should do your best to put on a cheerful, smiling countenance, and run at once to do what your mother bids you. That is going against your sulky humour, and you must do the same when you are in a proud humour, or an angry humour, or any other kind of bad humour, namely, first pray against it, and then try with God's grace, which he will

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certainly give you, to do the very opposite to what your humour inclines you. You cannot think how much you please God when you deny yourselves in this way, and what a great reward you will receive for it hereafter at the day of judgment.

But we must also go against our *inclinations*. Our inclinations, like our humours, are good and bad; sometimes we are inclined to do what is good, or at least what is lawful and permitted, and sometimes we are inclined to do what is wrong and forbidden by God. Of course we must go against our bad inclinations which lead us to sin; that is easy to understand. But you will wonder, perhaps, when I tell you that we must sometimes go against our lawful inclinations. And why so? Because we must not always let our will have its way even in things that are no sin; otherwise we shall grow up wayward and self-willed. Then when temptation comes, as we have never learnt to refuse ourselves anything, the devil will easily get us to indulge ourselves by doing what is forbidden. It is partly for this reason that the Church orders us to fast and abstain, namely, to teach us to go against our natural inclination to indulge our appetite; and thus she practises us in the virtue of self-denial. You are not too young, my dear children, to learn to deny your inclinations, for example, by not eating and drinking between meals, by giving part of your food to your companions or the poor, by not always wanting your own way with your playfellows, or brothers and sisters, but being ready to play as they would like, rather than as you would like yourselves. It is thus that you should learn while you are young to mortify your inclinations in little things, and then you will have grace, when you grow older, to make still more generous sacrifices for the love of Jesus Christ.

Finally, we must go against our own *passions*.

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You can easily find out what passions you are most liable to, by noticing your ordinary inclinations and feelings. For example, sometimes you feel proud of your nice clothes, or because you fancy you are good looking or clever, and you expect every one to praise and admire you. These feelings show that the passion of *vanity*, which is the inordinate love of esteem, is one of your dangerous enemies. Or, perhaps, you are inclined to be easily vexed, and if any of your companions happens to call you a name or to hit you a blow, you are eager to revenge yourself; this shows that you must be ever on your guard against the passion of *anger*. Or you are lazy in getting up in the morning, often miss your prayers, learn your lessons badly, and spend a deal of time in idleness; all these are signs that you are inclined to the passion of *sloth*. Now when you notice any of these signs, be on your guard, pray for grace to overcome the temptation, and try to do the very opposite to the passion which tempts you. If it is *vanity*, try to be very humble, and to avoid rather than seek for praise. If it is anger, try to be gentle and forgiving; if it is sloth, to be active and diligent. In this way you will gain many glorious victories, each of which will obtain for you fresh grace and merit a special crown hereafter.

THE HERMIT AND HIS DISCIPLE.

A certain hermit who dwelt in a cave in the deserts of Thebais, had a virtuous disciple whom he was in the habit of instructing each evening, after which he was accustomed to dismiss him to bed with his blessing. One night it happened that the hermit fell asleep while giving his instruction, and slept so soundly that he did not awake till after midnight. The young man waited in vain for the hermit to awake, that they might make their usual evening prayer together, and that he might retire to rest. At length he grew very drowsy, and was strongly tempted to leave his master and go to bed,

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but he resisted the temptation and continued to watch by his side. Seven times was he tempted in the same manner, for his eyes were heavy, and he was very weary with watching, but still he persevered, for he was determined that sloth should not prevail over him. At length his master awoke, and finding his disciple by his side, asked him why he had not retired to rest. "Because," replied the youth, "you did not dismiss me." "But why did you not awake me?" said the hermit. "Father," replied his disciple, "I could not presume to disturb you." Thereupon they said their prayers, and the hermit dismissed him to bed. Then falling into an ecstasy, the old man beheld a magnificent palace, in which was placed a throne, and over it seven crowns of glory. At the same time he was told by an Angel, that they were destined to reward his diligent disciple, who had that night merited these seven crowns, by his generous resistance to the temptations of satan.—*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

THE BUNCH OF GRAPES.

It is related in the life of St. Macarius, one of the Fathers of the Desert, that he one day received a present of a beautiful bunch of grapes. Though he felt a longing desire to taste the fruit, he determined to deny himself, and in order to exercise himself at the same time in mortification and charity, he sent them on to another hermit, who lived at a little distance, and whom he knew to be sick and infirm. The sick man, however, was inspired with the same thought as St. Macarius, and sent them on to a third hermit, and he to a fourth, until in this manner they had travelled through most of the cells in the desert without any one tasting a single grape. In the end it happened that the hermit who received them last, not knowing whence they had came, sent them as a present to the holy Abbot St. Macarius. The Saint perceiving them to be the very same grapes which had been first offered to him, and learning on inquiry through whose hands they had passed, returned thanks to God for the great spirit of self-denial which the brethren had shown. Nevertheless, it is recorded that he could not himself be induced to taste of the grapes.—*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

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Q. Why are we bound to deny ourselves in this manner?

A. Because our natural inclinations are prone to evil from our very childhood; and if not corrected by self-denial, they will certainly carry us to hell.

To deny ourselves by going against our own humours, inclinations and passions, is not only profitable to the soul, but absolutely necessary, owing to the natural inclination to evil which we have inherited from our first parents. When Adam was created by Almighty God he was pure and innocent, and had not to suffer from any rebellion of the flesh. His appetites and affections were regulated by his reason and governed by his free will; while, on the other hand, his reason was supernaturally enlightened by God, and his will was perfectly subject to the Divine Law. When, however, he fell into sin, everything was thrown into disorder. His understanding became darkened, and his appetites and affections rose in rebellion against his will, urging him to desire and do what he knew to be evil rather than what he knew to be good and pleasing to God. In other words, the soul of man became infected with the poison of concupiscence, which is a natural inclination to evil rather than good. This inclination, which we have inherited from our first parents, remains with us for our trial and greater merit, even after the actual guilt of original sin has been forgiven by Baptism. Hence the Catechism says, that *our natural inclinations are prone*, or inclined, *to evil from our very childhood*. Indeed, we have unhappily increased this inclination to evil, with which we were born, by our own actual sins, and every time that we give way to our wicked passions we increase it still more. Hence arises the necessity of constant self-denial, since our inclinations acquire fresh strength by indulgence, and therefore, as the Catechism says, *if not curbed*, that is restrained, *and corrected by self-denial*,

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will infallibly carry us to hell. From this you may understand how guilty those parents are in the sight of God, who, by a weak indulgence of their children's humours, and a criminal neglect in correcting their faults, allow their passions to increase each day in strength, until in the end it is almost impossible to uproot them. You will understand better the truth of what I have said from the following story.

THE HERMIT'S ANSWER TO HIS DISCIPLES.

A certain hermit, being one day asked by his disciples in what manner they could best secure the victory over their passions, took them into a plantation of cypress trees, which were of different sizes, according to the length of time which they had been planted. Pointing to a very little one, he bade one of his disciples pull it up, which he did very easily with one hand, for it was only a few days since it had been placed in the ground. He then pointed to another somewhat bigger, which his disciple also pulled up, but he had to take both hands to it, and to exert his strength, for having been planted a few months, its roots had already begun to take hold of the soil. A third, which had been a year in the ground, the youth found himself quite unable to uproot; so his companions came to help him, and by their united strength they at length succeeded in extracting it. The hermit then pointed to a fourth, of some years' growth, but all their efforts to pull it out of the ground produced not the slightest effect. Upon which the hermit said, "My children, so it is with our passions. When they are yet young and have not taken root, it is easy with a little care to overcome them; but when by long habit they have become rooted in our souls, it is very difficult indeed to subdue them. Strive, then, now while you are young, to destroy these enemies, who otherwise will cause you severe conflicts when you grow older, and may even be the cause of your eternal ruin."—*Histoires Edifiantes.*

THE COUNTRYMAN AND THE VIPERS.

A countryman walking one day through the woods, fell in with a nest of vipers. At first sight of them he was afraid and started back, but at length summoning up courage, he returned and took the nest, which contained a brood of seven

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young vipers. For three weeks he kept this singular family in his house, feeding them meanwhile with bread and milk, till one day a friend came to see him. "You should not forget," said the visitor, "that if you do not destroy these vipers now while they are young, but on the contrary go on feeding them, they will grow very quickly, and you may depend upon it that sooner or later they will fasten on you with their poisonous fangs, and you will fall a victim to your imprudence." "Oh, never fear," said the countryman, "they are only young, and I have plenty of time before me. Besides, I take great precaution, and if ever I find them dangerous I can soon get rid of them." "Do not rely upon that," said his friend, "for in all probability they will take you by surprise." To this the owner of the vipers made no answer, and his friend took his leave, but not without feeling serious uneasiness. A few days after, he returned, and found the countryman in dreadful torture, for he had just been bitten by the dangerous reptiles. His friend hastened to his assistance, but it was too late, the poison had entered his blood, and he soon after expired.—*Mrs. Herbert.*

Q. How are we to take up our cross?

A. By submitting with patience to the labours and sufferings of this short life, and embracing them willingly for the love of God.

The next rule, which our Blessed Lord gives us, is *to take up our cross*, which we do by *submitting with patience to the labours and sufferings* which God here sends us, and even *embracing them willingly for his love.* This life, my dear children, is a life of toil and trial; God has wisely ordained it so, partly as a punishment for sin, and partly that we may not become attached to the empty and fleeting pleasures of this world, but may continually strive after that happy eternity for which we were created. Moreover, by the troubles and afflictions which he sends us in this life, he gives us the opportunity of laying up a treasure for that which is to come, since the smallest suffering, borne with patience for his love, merits for us a great reward hereafter. Hence St. Paul says,

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"That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."*

Whenever, therefore, any trial or suffering befalls us, whether it comes directly from God, as sickness, poverty, the loss of friends, &c., or whether it comes through the malice of men, as persecution, insults or injustice, let us accept it with patience, and even with joy, for the love of that Heavenly Father who has sent it, or at least permitted it to happen for our greater good. It is even said in Holy Scripture that sufferings are a sign of God's special love—"Whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth; and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth!"† And how is this? It is because by suffering the soul is purified, perfected in virtue, enriched with merit, and prepared for a happy union with God hereafter. Thus the cross is one of the marks of the true disciples of Jesus Christ, as it was of our Blessed Lord himself. He has gone before us carrying his cross, we must follow him bearing ours with courage and patience, if we wish to arrive with him at eternal life. "Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me," he says, "cannot be my disciple."‡

The following beautiful story will show you, my dear children, how the trials of this life become more and more easy to bear in proportion as we embrace them generously for the love of God, and unite them to the sufferings of our Blessed Redeemer.

"GRASP YOUR CROSS FIRMLY."

A certain holy religious, having been tried by Almighty God with many severe afflictions, began to lose courage, and was tempted to think that God had abandoned her, and that she would never be able to support so heavy a cross. That same night as she lay on her bed, she seemed to see before

* II. Cor. iv. 17. † Heb. xii. 6. ‡ Luke xiv. 27.

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her our Blessed Lord himself, his head crowned with thorns, his countenance disfigured with wounds and blood, and a heavy cross upon his shoulders. He advanced to her bedside, and she then perceived that he carried in his hands another cross similar to his own, but smaller and of lighter make. "My daughter," he said to her, "take up your cross and follow me." She accordingly rose from her bed, and placing the cross on her shoulders, began to follow our Lord, as it seemed, up a steep hill, the surface of which was covered with thorns and briars. After she had taken a few steps, she began to lose courage, for the cross which she bore appeared to press heavier and heavier upon her shoulders, so as almost to weigh her to the ground; while to add to her misery her feet, which were bare, were torn by the thorns and briars on which she was forced to tread. In her extreme distress, she called out for help to our Blessed Lord, upon which he turned and said to her, "If you would carry your cross with ease, grasp it firmly, and place your feet in my footsteps." She obeyed, and found that the more readily she embraced her cross, the lighter it grew, while on stepping on the footprints of our Lord she noticed, what she had not before observed, that wherever He trod, the thorns disappeared and soft and fragrant flowers sprang up in their place, so that she was able to follow him henceforth with ease up the steep ascent. Upon reaching the summit, our Lord gave her his blessing and disappeared, leaving her full of courage, and generously determined not only willingly to embrace the trials which he sent her, but to unite them to his sufferings, and to imitate to the utmost the patience of which he has set us so admirable an example in his Sacred Passion.

Q. How are we to follow Christ?
A. By walking in His footsteps and imitating His virtues.

Q. What are the principal virtues we are to learn of Him?
A. Meekness, humility, and obedience.

Another rule which our Blessed Lord gives us, is *to follow him*, in other words, *to walk in his footsteps* by *the imitation of his virtues*. For God sent his Beloved Son into the world not only to redeem us and to instruct us by his words, but also to put before us a perfect model of virtue which we might copy in our own lives. The more we become like him, the

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dearer we are to God; indeed, it is only the likeness which we have to Jesus Christ which can find us any favour at all with God, or secure for us the joys of eternal life. Hence St. Paul says that those whom God has predestined, he has predestined to be "made conformable to the image of his Son,"* that is to say, that all who are saved will be saved on this ground alone, namely, their conformity or likeness to Jesus Christ. It was for this reason, my dear children, that the Saints were accustomed to set before them continually the example of Jesus Christ, and to try to copy him in everything—in his love of God and his charity towards men, in his obedience and humility, in his meekness, his patience, &c. And by dint of constantly striving to imitate him, they became very like him, so much so, indeed, that we might say of them, as St. Paul, inspired by God, said of himself,† that they lived no longer themselves—their spirit and lives being so different from those of common men—but that Jesus Christ himself lived, spoke and acted in them.

Among all the virtues of our Blessed Lord, there are three especially which we ought to strive continually to learn of him, namely, *Meekness*, *Humility*, and *Obedience*. And why so? First, because he himself points them out especially for our imitation, and secondly, because they are all three opposed to the deadly sin of pride, which was the beginning of evil, and the cause of the fall both of the Angels and our first parents. For pride, though the mother of many vices, shows itself especially in three ways, namely, by resenting injuries, attributing all that it has good to itself, and setting itself up against lawful authority. Now the three virtues here mentioned are directly opposed to these three forms of pride.

* Rom. viii. 29. † Gal. ii. 20.

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Meekness enables us to bear injuries and affronts without resentment; *Humility* makes us acknowledge by deeds, as well as words, that whatever good we have comes from God; and *Obedience* makes us submit our will to that of our superiors for the love of God. Hence if we practice these three virtues, we shall heal three of the worst wounds inflicted on our souls by pride, and we shall have gone a great way towards making our souls conformable to the image of Jesus Christ.

Of *Meekness* and *Humility*, our Blessed Lord says to us in the holy Gospel, "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." * These are, therefore, the two favourite virtues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and if you wish to know to what extent our Lord practised them, you have only to read the history of his cruel Passion. There you will see him betrayed, blasphemed, mocked, derided, blindfolded, struck on the face, spit upon, scourged, crowned with thorns and crucified, yet uttering not a word of complaint, on the contrary, praying for his executioners. Hence the prophet Isaiah compares him to a meek and gentle lamb, that utters no complaint when it is shorn of its wool, or even led to the slaughter: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth." † And he himself says to us by the mouth of the same prophet, "I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them; I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me." ‡ Again, you behold Him, who was the Lord and Maker of all, humbling himself so far as to die on an infamous gibbet between two thieves, as if he had been the most notorious and the vilest of criminals. "He humbled himself," says the Apostle, "becoming

* Matt. xi. 29. † Is. liii. 7. ‡ Is. L. 6.

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obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross."*

No less dear to our Blessed Lord is the virtue of *Obedience*. His coming into the world, his taking upon himself a mission attended with so many labours and sufferings, and his submitting to so cruel a death in atonement for the sins of men, are so many proofs of his perfect Obedience to the will of his Heavenly Father. But his love of the virtue of Obedience appears still more remarkable from the fact that he obeyed not only his Heavenly Father, but his own creatures, Mary and Joseph, and this not merely when he was a child—though he was always their Sovereign Lord and Master—but even when he became a man, up to the age of thirty years, at which time he entered on his public preaching. My dear children, let us have a great esteem for this virtue of Obedience, which was so beloved by Jesus Christ, and let us practise it continually along with his two other favourite virtues, Meekness and Humility, that so he may know and acknowledge us at the last day as his true disciples.

ST. MARTIN AND THE DEVIL.

It is related in the life of St. Martin of Tours, that on one occasion as he was praying in his cell, the devil appeared to him, clad in royal robes, and with a crown of gold and precious stones upon his head. Looking at St. Martin with a mild and gracious countenance, he said to him twice, "I am Jesus Christ, who have come to visit thee." The Saint, knowing well that the spirit of Jesus Christ was a spirit of humility and self-denial, while, on the other hand, pride and ostentation were the special marks of all the works of satan, at once detected the artifice and replied, "The Lord Jesus said not that he was to come clothed with purple and crowned and adorned with a diadem. Nor will I ever believe *him* to be Christ, who shall not come in the habit and figure in which Christ suffered, and who shall not bear the marks of his cross on his body." At these words the fiend vanished, leaving the cell filled with an intolerable stench.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

* Phil. ii 8.

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TWENTY-FIRST INSTRUCTION.

The Christian's Enemies—the Devil, the World and the Flesh. How to combat them.

Q. Which are the enemies the Christian must fight against all the days of his life?

A. The devil, the world, and the flesh.

Q. What do you mean by the devil?

A. Satan and all his wicked angels, who are ever seeking to draw us into sin, that we may be damned with them.

"The life of man upon earth," says holy Job, "is a warfare."* He has continually to struggle against the enemies of his salvation, who seek to destroy his soul, and rob him of the possession of eternal life. Hence it is of great importance for him to know who those enemies are against whom he has to fight, what weapons they use, in what manner they plan their attacks, and what he must do to secure the victory.

Now the Catechism tells us that our enemies are three in number, namely, *the devil, the world and the flesh.* These three have formed a solemn league against us, and help each other in their attacks. We, on our part, should also make a league with Almighty God and the Saints and Angels, that we may be able to engage with courage and vanquish these deadly foes.

Foremost among them there is *the devil.* "Our wrestling," says St. Paul, "is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."† By *the*

* Job vii. 1. † Eph. vi. 12.

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devil, therefore, we mean not one evil spirit only, but Lucifer or *Satan*, the prince of devils, *with all the other wicked angels*, who along with him rebelled against God, and were in punishment of their crime cast down to the bottomless pit of hell. These evil spirits bear us a deadly hatred, not that we have done anything to injure them, but out of envy, because God loves us, and has created us to occupy the bright thrones, and enjoy the eternal delights which they have lost by sin. Hence they are bent upon destroying us, and *are ever seeking to draw us into sin that we may be damned with them.*

But you will wonder perhaps why God, who is so Good and loves us all so tenderly, allows the devil to tempt us. My dear children, it is to try our love and obedience, and to enable us to merit eternal life by fighting generously against His and our enemies. For God is infinitely Just as well as Good, and his Justice requires that before rewarding us with a crown of glory, we should have fought the good fight and gained the victory. "To him that shall overcome," says our Lord, "I will give to sit with me in my throne, as I also have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne."* It was for this reason that God allowed Adam and Eve to be tempted in the garden of Paradise, that by resisting temptation they might merit the great rewards which he had promised them. Unhappily they refused the combat, and yielded to Satan as soon as ever he attacked them; for which act of cowardice and disobedience they were, by the just Anger of God, driven out of Paradise, and condemned to both temporal and eternal death.

Let us now see *what weapons* the devil uses to attack us. His weapons, my dear children, are the

* Apoc. iii. 21.

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artifices which he employs to tempt us. These are very numerous. Sometimes he tries to get us to commit sin by filling our minds with wicked imaginations, such as impure or blasphemous thoughts. At other times, being the captain of the allied forces, he calls in the world and the flesh to his aid, and tempts us by means of bad companions, or by our unruly appetites, inclinations or passions. Then again, as we see from the history of holy Job, he is permitted sometimes to make use of natural causes, such as storms and tempests, of human events, and of various afflictions and calamities, to try our virtue and lead us, if possible, to offend God. It is for this reason that the evil spirits are called by St. Paul "the rulers of the world," because God permits them to have a certain power in the world for the trial and greater merit of the elect. Moreover, we know that satan is never weary or idle, but is always hatching some plot or forming some scheme to destroy us; and if for a time he seems to sleep, it is only that he may lull us to a false security, and then, when we are not expecting it, rush on us unprepared, and inflict on our souls a mortal wound.

You see, then, what a powerful, crafty and deadly enemy we have to contend against. But we must not lose courage; for the league which *we* have made with God and the heavenly host is far more powerful than that which the devil has made with the world and the flesh. Jesus Christ himself is our Captain, and under his command, if we only fight bravely, we are sure of victory; the Saints and Angels are our helpers, and they can put to flight a whole legion of devils. But before we consider the manner of fighting and plan of operations which we must follow, let us see who the allies are whom satan has called in to his aid. And first of all *the world.*

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Q. What do you mean by the world?

A. All wicked company, and all such as love the vanities, riches, and pleasures of this world better than God.

Q. Why do you number these amongst the enemies of the soul?

A. Because they are always seeking by word or example, to carry us along with them in the broad road that leads to damnation.

Yes, my dear children, by *the world* we mean in the first place, *all wicked company*, that is to say, those who set the commandments of God at defiance, and whose conversation and conduct are sinful. But we also include under the title of *the world* those whose lives, though not openly sinful, are full of the *spirit* of the world, and who, instead of loving God above all things, as they are bound to do by the rule of the Gospel, *love the vanities, riches and pleasures of this world better than God.* All these are justly numbered amongst the enemies of our souls, *because they are always seeking by word and example to carry us along with them in the broad road* of sinful self-indulgence, *which* in the end *leads to damnation.*

As to *wicked company*, there is, as I have already taught you,* no danger against which we ought more constantly to be on our guard. There would be very few sins committed in this world, very few souls lost eternally, if it were not for the bad advice and evil example of wicked companions. The devil is not permitted to come to tempt you in a visible form as he came to Adam and Eve, so he does what is far more likely to succeed, he sends bad companions to draw you into sin, by means of their example. He knows very well that you would soon run away if you saw him in all his ugliness as God himself sees him, but that you dont think of running away when

* Vol. II. p. 214.

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children like yourselves come to talk to you and play with you, though in reality they are his own messengers. At first, perhaps, you do not know what they are, for they often wait a little before they say or do anything very bad; but when they find that you are giddy, and vain, and cowardly, and cannot bear to be laughed at, they show themselves in their true colours, and speak the language of their father, the devil, and do his works without disguise. Then after a bit, by advising, or flattering, or mocking, or provoking, or laughing at you, or by the mere force of their example, they get you to say and do the same wicked things as themselves, at first timidly, perhaps, and with shame, but soon boldly and without remorse. Alas! how many thousands have in this way been robbed of the priceless jewel of their innocence, and ruined both in soul and body for time and eternity! Oh, my dear children, I cannot too strongly advise you to avoid all wicked companions as you would the plague or satan himself. Never play with any children without the permission of your parents, nor even then unless you have reason to believe that they are good and virtuous. If at any time you find that you are mistaken about them, and that they curse and swear, or talk bad talk, or steal or do other wicked things, go no more with them. You cannot touch pitch, says the Wise Man, without being defiled,* neither can you keep company with sinners without being covered with the filth of their wickedness. To fly from temptation in such cases is true wisdom and the only security, for "he that loveth the danger shall perish in it."†

But besides avoiding the company of those whose conduct is openly sinful, we ought also to shun those who are full of a worldly spirit, for example, such as

* Ecclus. xiii. 1. † Ecclus. iii. 27.

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are fond of dress and vain amusement, or who think of little but pleasure and self-indulgence. It was the friendship of such worldlings that extinguished the fervour of piety in the heart of the young Teresa, that caused her by degrees to give up her practices of devotion, and that filled her with the love of worldly amusement, dress, and idle reading, exposing her thereby, had not God taken pity on her, to the imminent danger of losing her soul. In choosing our friends, then, we should select those from whom we can learn something good, and whose virtue and piety may be a bright example before our eyes to encourage us to overcome our faults, and advance daily in the way of perfection. "A faithful friend," says the Wise Man, "is the medicine of life and immortality."* And why? Because he helps us to cure the wounds of our souls, and to merit a happy eternity. Hence, "he that hath found him, hath found a treasure."†

Q. What do you mean by the flesh?

A. Our own corrupt inclinations and passions, which are the most dangerous of all our enemies.

The last of our spiritual enemies, but *the most dangerous of all* is *the flesh*, by which we mean *our own corrupt inclinations and passions*. I have already told you that one of the fatal consequences of original sin was a rebellion of the lower part of our nature against the higher, in other words, of the flesh against the spirit, which itself had rebelled against God. Hence it is that our natural inclinations are called *corrupt*, inasmuch as they lead us to evil rather than to good, for example, to the inordinate love of pleasures, riches and honours, rather than to the pure love and service of God. It is

* Ecclus. vi. 16. † Ecclus. vi. 14.

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these sinful inclinations of the flesh (which we usually call concupiscence) that excite the passions, raising often such a storm in our souls that our reason becomes obscured, and our will powerfully incited to sin. During this tumult of the passions, the devil reaps his most plentiful harvest, for then we are so blinded that we do not see him at work, indeed, he has little work to do, for he has only to let our evil inclinations have their own way. So you see we have no more dangerous enemy than our corrupt nature, partly because we notice it less, and partly because it has more power over us than either the devil or the world. Hence arises the continual necessity of self-denial, that is, of going against our own humours, inclinations and passions.

Q. What must we do to hinder these enemies from drawing us into sin?

A. We must watch, pray, and fight against all their suggestions and temptations.

Q. Whom must we depend upon in this warfare?

A. Not upon ourselves, but upon God alone.

Having seen what enemies we have to fight against, we must next consider how to engage them. The Catechism says that there are three things which we must do to prevent them from overcoming us, or in other words, to hinder them from drawing us into sin. First *we must watch*, secondly we must *pray*, and thirdly we must *fight against all their suggestions and temptations.*

First, *we must watch*—we must be ever on our guard, for our enemies are ever seeking to surprise and to destroy us. Hence our Blessed Lord exhorts us to exercise a constant vigilance—"Watch ye and pray," said he to his disciples, "that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the

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flesh weak."* And the Apostle St. Peter speaks to the same effect—"Be sober and *watch*, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour."† But how are we to watch? By setting a guard over the senses—over the eyes that they do not look at what is dangerous, over the ears that they do not listen to what is evil, over the tongue that it does not allow itself too much liberty, over the appetites that they do not betray us into sinful self-indulgence. And again, we *watch* by keeping out of bad or doubtful company, by avoiding dangerous places of amusement, in a word, by shunning everything that would expose us to the risk of offending God.

Secondly, we must *pray*, for *we must not depend in this warfare upon ourselves, but on God alone.* You see our Blessed Lord himself tells us not only to watch, but also to pray. "Watch and pray." He knows very well that if we trust to ourselves we shall be certainly overcome; for we are weak, and by the malice of our corrupt nature prone to evil rather than to good. Therefore he bids us to look to Him for help, promising that he will always give it, if only we ask for it: "Ask and you shall receive,"‡ and again, "If you shall ask me anything in my Name, that will I do."§ We must, therefore, pray continually, not only by being faithful to our morning and night prayers, hearing Mass and going to the Sacraments, but also by often raising our hearts to God during the day with little aspirations, and especially by invoking him in moments of temptation. "Jesus and Mary, help me." "Lord, save me, or I perish." "My good Angel, defend me." Such little prayers uttered with fervour in the time of trial will

* Matt. xxvi. 41. † I. Pet. v. 8. ‡ John xvi. 24.
§ John xiv. 14.

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never fail to bring down on our souls grace sufficient to overcome the temptation which besets us.

Thirdly, we must *fight*. But are we not fighting while we are praying? Yes, my dear children, we certainly are. But what the Catechism means is, that besides praying for God's grace to assist us, we must also correspond with that grace by doing our best to put away the temptation. For example, if the temptation comes from some bad companion or dangerous occasion of sin, we must go away out of the danger as quickly as we can. If it is a bad thought that comes into our mind of itself, we must try to think of something else, or employ ourselves in something that will occupy our minds. Another excellent way of fighting against temptation, is by doing some act of virtue which is directly contrary to the sin we are tempted to commit. For example, if we are tempted to revenge ourselves, we might say a prayer for our enemy, or try to do him some good turn; if we are tempted to be rude to those who are over us, we might try to treat them with more respect than usual; if we are tempted to be greedy, we might give away to our companions or the poor some nice thing which we intended to eat ourselves. Those who fight in this way are truly good and generous soldiers of Jesus Christ, and are treading faithfully in the footsteps of the Saints, who by such efforts not only vanquished their spiritual enemies, but arrived at a heroic degree of perfection.

TEMPTATION GENEROUSLY OVERCOME.

We read in the life of St. Bernard, that happening one day to cast his eyes upon a woman of singular beauty, the devil took occasion thereby to tempt him with impure imaginations. In a moment he saw his danger, and determined at any cost to trample the temptation under foot. He accordingly betook himself with all haste to a pond that was partly frozen, and plunging into the water, remained resolutely

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there until the bitter cold which benumbed his limbs had entirely extinguished the flame of concupiscence. At length he was drawn out half dead, but Almighty God rewarded his generous act by an extraordinary gift of holy purity, which rendered him superior to all emotions of the flesh.

A similar instance is related in the life of St. Francis of Assisi, who, when tempted with evil thoughts, often cast himself into ditches full of ice and snow. On one occasion, being violently assaulted in his cell with impure imaginations, he hastened to a bed of briars hard by, and casting himself therein, rolled among the thorns, until the fire of concupiscence was extinguished in the blood, which streamed from his mangled flesh. The briars were, it is said, at the same moment converted into rose trees, which still flourish, and are shown to the numerous pilgrims who flock to the church of the Portiuncula at Assisi, where the miracle took place.

A certain holy solitary, named St. Martinian, was one day visited by a wicked woman, named Zoe, who sought to seduce him into sin. When on the very point of yielding to the temptation, he was, by the grace of God, touched with remorse, and his eyes became opened to the precipice, on the brink of which he stood. Whereupon returning to his cell, he kindled a large fire, and lying down, laid his feet upon it, keeping them in the midst of the flames until the pain of the burning flesh caused him to cry aloud with anguish. Zoe hearing the noise ran to the spot, and found him with his face bathed with tears, and his feet half burnt. "Ah!" exclaimed he, "how shall I be able to support the fire of hell, if I cannot endure this earthly flame, which is, in comparison with it, but an empty shadow?" This generous act on the part of St. Martinian, was not only the means of preserving his own soul unstained, but also of converting Zoe, who became from that time a sincere penitent.—*Butler's Lives of the Saints.*

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TWENTY-SECOND INSTRUCTION.

CHAPTER IX.—*The Christian's Daily Exercise. Pious Practices on Awaking and Rising. Morning Prayers. Attendance at Mass. The Practice of Meditation.*

We have now come to the last chapter of the Catechism, which contains many important instructions as to the manner in which we should spend the day. For, each day is so much time given us by God to work for eternity; and when he comes to judge us, he will demand a strict account of it. The fruit of each day will be eternal, either for good or for evil. If we have spent it well, we shall have laid up thereby a treasure of merit for eternal life; but if we have spent it badly, or even neglected to employ it in the fulfilment of our necessary duties, we shall not only lose for all eternity some degree of glory which we should otherwise have obtained, but we shall, if we repent not, experience the terrible sentence passed alike on the slothful servant who buried his master's talent,* and upon the unjust and wicked one who defrauded his master and oppressed his fellow-servants.†

Q. What is the first thing you should do in the morning?

A. I should make the sign of the cross, and say, O my God, I offer my heart and soul to Thee.

It is a common saying with regard to any undertaking, that "the beginning is half the work." This

* Matt. xxv. 24, &c.

† Matt. xviii. 23, &c. Matt. xxiv. 48, &c.

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is very true, my dear children, with respect to the good employment of the day. If we begin the day well, we draw down on ourselves at the very commencement the Divine Blessing, on which the victory over our spiritual enemies mainly depends ; but if, on the other hand, we commence it badly, the devil gains an advantage over us at the outset, and knowing that through our own fault we have lost some degree of God's grace, he presses his attacks with such boldness and so many artifices, that there is great reason to fear that we shall at length get tired of the combat, and acknowledge ourselves vanquished. In what manner, then, must we commence the day, so as to gain an important advantage at the beginning of the struggle? The Catechism tells us

In the first place, as soon as ever we awake, we must *make the sign of the cross and say, O my God, I offer my heart and soul to thee!* By so doing we take our stand at once under the banner of our Great Captain, Jesus Christ, namely, his cross, which is an object of terror to the devil, but of strength and support to the faithful Christian. Moreover, we thereby draw down upon our heads the blessing and protection of the three Persons of the Adorable Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in whose Name we declare that we are ready to enter into the lists of battle against our three deadly enemies, the devil, the world and the flesh. *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.* At these words the devils tremble. They are not afraid of us as long as we come in our own name, but they know that when we come in the Name of the Lord of Hosts, as David did when he stood forth against Goliath, they are as little able to withstand us, as was that mighty giant to resist the shepherd boy who came against him with no other weapons than a pebble and a sling.

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Having made the sign of the cross, we next make an offering of our whole selves to God, to be for ever employed in his Divine service, *Oh my God, I offer my heart and soul to Thee*, in other words, "I dedicate to Thee all my desires and affections, as well as the higher powers of my soul, my understanding, my memory, and my will." By this offering we consecrate to God the first fruits of the day; and you know, my dear children, that it is the first fruits which God especially loves, and which in the old law he required to be reserved for his Divine Service. In return for this offering Almighty God pours forth upon our heart and soul a special benediction, by which he takes us under his Divine protection and engages, if we do not unhappily by sin revoke our offering, to shield us from all the attacks of our infernal enemies.

Q. What should you do next?

A. I should rise diligently, dress myself modestly, and occupy myself with good thoughts.

Q. What are those good thoughts?

A. Such as thoughts on the goodness of God, who grants me this day to labour in it for the salvation of my soul; and that perhaps this day may be my last.

After we have made the sign of the cross and offered ourselves to God, we should, if it is our proper time for getting up, *rise diligently*, that is to say, without dawdling or delay. If we are called, we should obey the call promptly and cheerfully, as if it were the voice of God calling us, like he did the young Samuel in the temple. "Here I am, O Lord," we might say to him in our hearts. "Here I am, ready to spend this day which thou givest me in loving thee and fulfilling thy holy Will." The devil often tempts people to lie in bed a few minutes longer

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when they are called. They say to themselves, "Oh, it will do to get up by-and-by. I will just lie *a little* longer, it is so warm and snug." And so they stay on to the last moment, and when they are at length obliged to get up, they are so pressed for time, that ten to one they hurry over their prayers, or miss them altogether. My dear children, do not let the devil persuade you to begin the day with an act of idleness. Get up at once when you are called, to please Jesus Christ and his Blessed Mother. Thus you will begin the day well, and gain a victory over the devil at the very outset.

After rising, comes *dressing*, which we should perform modestly, remembering the presence of God and his holy Angels. Meanwhile, we should *occupy ourselves with good* and pious *thoughts*. Thus, for example, we might think of *the goodness of God, who grants us this day that we may labour in it for the salvation of our souls*. We should also reflect that *perhaps this very day may be the last of our lives*, for we know not the day nor the hour when God may call us. Such thoughts as these will inspire us with a good and firm resolution to spend the day in the service of Almighty God, and to avoid the faults that have made us in past time lose so many precious days, which like the waters of a quickly flowing stream are gone by, never, never to return.

Q. And what should you do after you have put on your clothes?

A. I should kneel down to my prayers, and perform my morning exercise.

Having finished dressing, the next thing is *to kneel down* and say our prayers. We say them *on our knees* out of reverence to God to whom we speak when we pray; but remember, that if ever you happen to forget your prayers, you should say them as you

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go to school, or while you are at your work, for it is much better to say them walking, sitting, or standing, than to miss them altogether. Our morning prayers are called in the Catechism our *morning exercise*, and our night prayers our *evening exercise*, because by them we *exercise* our soul in holy things and the worship of God. You will find the particular prayers, which are recommended for our morning and evening exercise at the end of the Catechism. Learn them carefully by heart, and say them every day of your lives on getting up and going to bed. Then will the grace of God descend upon your souls every morning and every evening like the refreshing dew on the parched earth, purifying and strengthening them, and making them fruitful in every good work.

You sometimes see children who are well instructed and know their duty, but whose souls are disfigured with many ugly faults. They are lazy and careless, passionate and quarrelsome, stubborn and disobedient. They tell lies by the dozen, and dont scruple at cheating and pilfering. Thus they go on, getting worse instead of better as they grow older. My dear children, what is the reason of this? I will tell you. It is because they say their prayers badly, or perhaps miss them altogether. If they said their prayers regularly and devoutly, God would certainly give them both the wish to be good and correct their faults, and grace and strength to accomplish it. As it is, he sees that they dont care about him, so, as a just punishment, he leaves them to themselves, and when the devil comes to tempt them, they give in to him at once. A labourer cannot work, neither can a soldier fight, if they get nothing to eat. Now the grace of God is the food of our souls, and if we neglect to nourish ourselves with it morning and night by saying our prayers, it follows, as a matter of course, that we can neither do good works nor overcome our spiritual enemies.

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Q. Should you do anything more, if you have time and opportunity ?

A. Yes; I should hear Mass and spend some time in meditation.

Besides saying your morning prayers you are also recommended, my dear children, to hear Mass and spend some time in meditation. These pious exercises, though not of general obligation, are the source of unspeakable blessings to those who practise them.

With regard to *hearing Mass*, you have already learnt the priceless value of that Holy Sacrifice, in which Jesus Christ is daily offered up to his Heavenly Father for the sins of men, and whereby the fruits of his Passion are applied to our souls. Therein we have opened to us an inexhaustible fountain of every grace, and happy are those who have time and opportunity each day to go and drink of those living waters by assisting devoutly at Holy Mass. In Catholic countries, where priests and altars are everywhere to be found, it is much easier to assist daily at Mass than it is with us ; accordingly we there find the churches thronged even at break of day with crowds of devout worshippers, who have dropped in to hear Mass on their way to work, thus invoking the blessing of Jesus on their daily toil. With us it is not possible for all to enjoy this privilege, but the rarer it is, the more should it be esteemed by those who possess it. Do you then, my dear children, never fail to assist at Mass on week-day mornings, whenever the opportunity is afforded you, especially on days of devotion and all feasts of the Blessed Virgin. Listen to the following story which will show you of what importance a single Mass may be to our souls, and also what power the devil has over those who consider the hearing of Mass a matter of little moment.

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THE HOLY MASS DISARMS THE DEVIL.

A gentleman in one of the provinces of Germany, having lost the greater part of his fortune, became much depressed, and was tempted to put an end to his life. Fortunately he made known the state of his mind to a prudent confessor, who advised him never to pass a day without hearing Mass, and to trust himself entirely to the Mercy of God. The gentleman accordingly engaged a priest to say Mass for him every morning, and he always assisted at it with great devotion, deriving therefrom both courage and consolation.

Now it happened one day that his chaplain went at an early hour to a neighbouring village, to assist at the first Mass of a youug priest, newly-ordained. The gentleman, fearing that he might be deprived of the benefit of the holy Sacrifice, hastened after him, but on his way met with a peasant, who told him that he might as well return home, for that Mass was already over. On hearing this, he was much disturbed and began to shed tears, saying aloud, "Alas, what will become of me! To-day may, perhaps, be the last of my life." The countryman, amazed at seeing his agitation, and being himself careless of God's grace, exclaimed, "Do not be troubled. I have heard the Mass, and if you like, I will give you my share in it in exchange for the cloak which you wear on your shoulders." The gentleman at once accepted the offer, and went on his way much comforted.

After visiting the village church to offer up his prayers before the Blessed Sacrament, he set out on his return home. But what was his horror, on arriving at the spot where the bargain had been struck, at perceiving the body of the peasant, like that of the traitor Judas, suspended from a tree by the neck. In fact, the very same temptation which had troubled his own mind had passed into the soul of the countryman, who, by voluntarily depriving himself of the grace which he had obtained by the hearing of Mass, became an easy prey to the tempter.—*Rodriguez' Christian Perfection.*

Finally, we are exhorted *to spend some time* each day *in meditation*. But what is meditation? It is thinking of good thoughts and praying in our hearts to God. For example, if, as the Catechism tells you, you think of God's Goodness while you are dressing, and that, perhaps, that very day may be

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the last of your lives, you are practising meditation. So important is this exercise, that we are advised to set apart a fixed time each day for the exercise of it. This is what is done in colleges, convents and monasteries; and many good people in the world have their regular hour or half-hour for meditation. Perhaps you think that it is very hard to meditate, and that it is a thing which only priests, and monks and nuns can understand. My dear children, that is quite a mistake; it is not at all difficult for people in the world, even for people that are ignorant and cannot read, to meditate. They may not meditate quite in the same way as those that have been better taught, but they can make a meditation just as pleasing to God, and just as profitable to their souls. Shall I tell you how? Well, first let us suppose you can read. Go and kneel at your little oratory or by your bedside, over which you will no doubt have a crucifix or some pious picture, and having made the sign of the cross, say a little prayer, for example, an "Our Father" and "Hail Mary," to beg God's blessing on your meditation. Then take into your hands a pious book, such as the "Think Well On't" or the "Clock of the Passion," by St. Alphonsus Liguori, or the "Preparation for Death," by the same author, and read slowly and attentively a page or two, or a chapter, stopping, as you go on, to think of the meaning of what you read, and making from time to time little acts of sorrow for your sins, and acts of love, thanksgiving, &c., along with such good resolutions as God shall put into your mind. Having spent your quarter or half-hour in this way, you might again repeat the "Our Father" and "Hail Mary," to thank God for his help, and to beg him to bless your resolutions, and so your meditation is finished. But you will say, "Supposing that I cannot read, what must I do then, for a book will be of no use?" My

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dear children, there is one book which every one can read, even those who have never learnt their letters, a book from which St. Bonaventure said he had learnt more than from all the books that ever were written. What is that book? It is the book of *the Crucifix*. He that cannot read, should take this book in his hand, and make his meditation from it. He will look at the wounded Hands and Feet of Jesus, and think of the agony which he endured when they were pierced with nails, and he hung suspended on the cross. He will look at his Sacred Head crowned with sharp thorns, at his Face covered with bruises and blood, at his Body torn and mangled with the cruel scourging, at his Side opened to afford a refuge to sinners within his Sacred Heart. Then he will think of his own sins and of his past ingratitude, of the infinite love of Jesus, and of the countless blessings he has received at his hands, and with these thoughts he will begin to feel his heart burning within him, and he will break out into acts of sincere contrition, love and thanksgiving, and into fervent resolutions to amend his life. There you have an excellent meditation, made without a book, or rather with the best of all books. So you see it is not hard to meditate, no not even for children like yourselves. Read the lives of the Saints, and you will find that many of them in their earliest years were wont to go and hide in some secret place, and spend long hours in meditation. And it was by this pious practice that they acquired that ardent love of God, that perfect purity of soul and body, that generous zeal for God's glory, that tender charity for their fellowmen, which you so much admire in them, and which, in fact, made them Saints. Do you, my dear children, imitate their bright example; begin even now early to think of good and holy things, and to pray in your hearts to God. Thus will you be treading in

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the footsteps of the Saints, and, daily advancing in virtue, will at length enjoy their happy company in Paradise.

THE BOY WHO FORGOT HIS DINNER.

When St. Peter of Alcantara was a child, he was distinguished for his love of prayer and spirit of recollection. He rose very early that he might have time to make his meditation, which he often prolonged for many hours. He then repaired to church, where he heard Mass with great devotion, and often received Holy Communion. The rest of the day was spent at school, but even there, and as he went along the streets, he never forgot God, but continually raised his heart to him by some prayer for help or some little act of love. At dinner he always left a portion on his plate for the love of God, and would never drink anything but water, though in those countries it is usual even for children to mix a little wine with their water.

Now it happened one day that, when the dinner hour came, Peter was missing. They sought him high and low, in every room of the house and every corner of the garden, but he could not be found. At length they bethought themselves of one room which they had not searched, namely, the oratory. There they found the holy child upon his knees, with his hands clasped and his eyes looking up to heaven. He had forgotten all about his dinner!—*God and his Creatures.*

What a reproach is the example of this holy boy to those lazy children, who, so far from forgetting their meals through love of their prayers, often sit down to eat in the morning without having said any prayers at all!

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TWENTY-THIRD INSTRUCTION.

The Christian's Daily Exercise continued. The Offering of all our Actions to God. Grace Before and After Meals. Other Pious Practices. The Duty of Thanksgiving.

We come now to speak of certain other pious practices, which will be of great use in enabling us to consecrate the day to God. For the whole day belongs to Him—He has lent it to us to be employed in his Divine service. Hence it is not sufficient to *begin* well by rising diligently and performing our morning exercise, we must *go on* as we have begun, by seeking in all things to fulfil God's Holy Will, and thus multiply that precious talent of Time with which he has entrusted us.

Q. What should you say when you begin any work or employment?

A. O my God, I do this for the love of Thee.

Q. And what should you do as to your eating, drinking, sleeping, and diversion?

A. I should use them with moderation, and do them to please God.

In order that our daily actions may bear fruit for eternal life, it is necessary above all that they should be done with the intention of pleasing God. For this reason, as soon as we wake in the morning, we offer our heart and soul to Him, desiring that they may both be ever united to him and employed in his Divine service. Again, when we perform our morning exercise, we make an express offering to God of all our daily actions—"I offer to thee all my thoughts,

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words, actions and sufferings." This general offering extends to the whole day, unless unhappily we recall it by committing some deliberate sin; so that all that we do during the day is thereby directed to God, and done with a view to please Him. It is, however, much to be recommended that we should renew this intention from time to time during the day, especially at the commencement of our principal actions and employments, saying, for example, *O my God, I do this for the love of thee.* This short prayer renews our good intention of striving in all things to please God, it shows him that we really wish to love him, and draws down a special blessing on the act we are about to perform, making it still more deserving of an eternal reward, which our Good God will not fail to lay up for us against the day of Judgment in his heavenly treasure house.

We read in the history of times gone by, that it was once commonly believed that there existed, yet undiscovered, a wonderful stone, which was called "the Philosopher's stone," and which possessed the singular and valuable property of converting whatever metal it touched into the purest gold. Many were found who devoted their lives and all their fortune to the discovery of this mineral, which indeed had no existence, except in their own heated imaginations. *We*, however, my dear children, by digging in the rich mine of the Holy Scripture, may be said to have discovered the true Philosopher's stone, or rather something far more precious and wonderful in its effects. It is contained in these words of St. Paul, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all for the glory of God,"* and again, "All whatsoever ye do in word or in work, all things do ye in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ." †

* I. Cor. x. 31. † Col. iii. 17.

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But how is it, you will ask, that these words contain so great a treasure? It is because they show us that even the commonest actions, such as our very eating, sleeping and diversions, become far more precious than the purest gold, if done for the glory of God and in the Name of our Blessed Lord. We must, however, take care that besides doing our actions in order to please God, we use therein due *moderation*, exercising in all these things the cardinal virtue of Temperance, by which excess is avoided, and our actions become worthy to be presented to God. Thus will our days, though in the eyes of men they contain nothing extraordinary, be precious before God, being filled up with good works done for his love and in the Name of his Divine Son.

The following story, which is taken from the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert, shows us the exceeding value of every act, however common, that is done for the love of God.

THE ANGEL AND THE HERMIT.

A certain hermit who had retired into the desert to do penance for his sins, was in the habit of going every day to a well at some distance in order to fetch water for his use. The journey was tiresome, but he made it cheerfully with the intention of pleasing God, and he usually said his prayers as he went along.

One very hot day, as he was carrying his can full of water under a broiling sun, the devil suggested to him that it was a very foolish thing to go daily such a distance for the water, when he might, if he pleased, build himself a cell close to the spring. This thought took such possession of his mind that he said to himself, "I declare I will set about it this very day, and not toil and weary myself any longer to no purpose."

While thus speaking, he was surprised to hear a voice behind him, saying, "One, two, three, four," as if there were some one walking after him and counting his steps. The hermit looked round in astonishment and beheld a lovely youth, clad in a brilliant robe of light, whom he knew at once to be an Angel. "Be not astonished," the stranger said,

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"I am your Guardian Angel, and I am counting your steps, that not one may pass unrewarded." With these words the beautiful vision disappeared, and the hermit giving thanks to God, went on his way with joyful steps, resolved to increase rather than to lessen the distance between his hermitage and the well.—*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

Q. What grace do you say before meals?

A. Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are going to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Q. What grace do you say after meals?

A. We give Thee thanks, Almighty God, for all thy benefits, who livest and reignest, world without end. Amen. May the souls of the faithful, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

To say grace before and after our meals is a pious custom, which has come down to us from the earliest ages of the Church, and which no good Catholic will ever omit. When our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist at his Last Supper, he *blessed* the bread and wine, and *gave thanks* to his Heavenly Father; in like manner do we, to imitate and honour him, beg a blessing on the food which we are about to receive, and return thanks after we have eat and drunk. And indeed it is most fitting that we should ask of God to bless those gifts of his, which the devil often makes use of to tempt mankind to sin. Thus did he seduce our first parents by means of an apple in the garden of Paradise; thus did he tempt the Israelites in the desert with sinful longings for the fleshpots of Egypt; thus does he lead multitudes to sin at the present day by transgressing the laws of the Church, or by indulging in luxurious eating or beastly intemperance. To prevent this evil influence of satan and the unhappy abuse of God's gifts, we ask of God, before we partake of food and drink, to bless both them and ourselves: *Bless us, O Lord,*

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and these thy gifts, which we are going to receive from thy Bounty, that we may not use them to offend thee, but for thy honour and love; and this we ask *through Christ our Lord*, through whose merits alone we can hope for any grace. In like manner after we have eat and drunk, we return thanks to God, knowing that what we have received, as well as every other gift, comes from his Divine hands: *We give thee thanks, Almighty God, for all thy benefits, who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.* Then we conclude with the usual prayer for the poor souls in purgatory, with which the Church never fails to finish all her devotions: *May the souls of the faithful, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

Be faithful, my dear children, to the pious practice of saying grace at all your meals, and that, wherever you may be, even in the company of Protestants. There are, alas! some Catholics so lukewarm and cowardly, as to be ashamed of saying their grace when Protestants are present, or of being seen by them to make the Sign of the Cross. Though we ought not to do anything in order to attract attention, neither should we omit a plain duty or a pious practice recommended to every Christian through fear of what people may say. Indeed, a faithful observance of our religion in presence of Protestants will never fail to edify them, and many a one has been brought to the true faith by seeing how Catholics make religion a daily duty of life and not a mere Sunday exercise. Finally, when you say grace, say it devoutly, standing erect with joined hands and eyes cast down, for it is not a mere outward form, but a raising of the heart and soul to God. For this reason also we make the Sign of the Cross before and after grace, as we do at the beginning and end of all our prayers. If thus you

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say your grace with fidelity and a holy reverence, you have every reason to hope that God will bless your food, and that it will profit you both for soul and body.

Q. By what means should you sanctify your ordinary actions and employments of the day?

A. By often raising up my heart to God whilst I am about them, and saying some short prayer to him.

Q. What should you do as often as you hear the clock strike?

A. I should turn myself to God, and say to him, "O my God, teach me to love thee in time and eternity."

I have already told you, my dear children, that all our actions and employments of the day become pleasing to God, and merit an eternal reward, provided that they are offered to him and done for his love. We may *sanctify* them still more, that is make them still more holy, *by often raising our hearts to God while we are about them, and saying some short prayer to him.* Nor have we to go far to find God. It is not necessary to mount up to heaven nor even to visit the Church, for though our Blessed Lord, as Man, is present only in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament, yet as God he is present everywhere along with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and if we be in a state of grace, he dwells in a special manner in the midst of our hearts. We have only, therefore, to *think of God*, and immediately we find him; we have only to *speak to him*, and immediately he hears and answers us, not indeed aloud in human words, but in good and holy thoughts and interior graces. Oh, how good is it thus to converse with God while we are at our work or at our books, or walking along the roads, or playing with our companions! His "conversation," says the Wise Man, "hath no bitterness, nor his company any tedious-

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ness, but joy and gladness."* We say to God, for example, on beginning an action, "Oh, my God, I do this for the love of thee;" and immediately he accepts what we are doing, and lays up for us a reward hereafter. We turn to him when we hear the clock strike, saying, "Oh, my God, teach me to love thee in time and eternity," and he bestows upon us in return a fresh degree of his holy love. We say to him, if unhappily we fall into any sin, "Oh, my Jesus, I am sorry for offending thee; help me not to sin again;" and he gives us at once his merciful pardon or grace to obtain it, strengthening us at the same time against future temptations. Ah, my dear children, if you accustom yourselves to converse thus with God, how quickly will your faults disappear, and how rapidly will you advance in the practice of every virtue. Your souls will then become like beautiful gardens, full of flowers and fruits, in which God will love to dwell, filling you with the sweetness of his presence, which is a foretaste of Paradise.

WORK AND PRAY; PRAY AND WORK.

The great St. Antony who led a life of prayer and austerity in the desert, upon one occasion fell into a state of dejection because he could not keep his mind continually employed in holy contemplation. Our Blessed Lord thereupon comforted him by the following vision. Before him he beheld the figure of a hermit like himself, busily employed in platting mats out of the leaves of the palm tree. After a time, he rose from his work and began to pray. His prayer finished, he again sat down to work, but after working for a time he returned to prayer. Meanwhile he heard a voice which said, "Work and pray; pray and work, and so thou shalt be saved."—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

Q. What should you do as often as you receive any blessing from God?

A. I should immediately make him a return of thanksgiving and love.

* Wisd. viii. 16.

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In this answer you are reminded of a duty, which is, perhaps, one of all others the most frequently neglected, namely, that of *immediately making to God a return of thanksgiving and love*, as often as you receive any blessing from his Divine Hands. In other words, you should never fail to bless and thank God for the gifts which he continually bestows upon you. Thus you should thank God for each day that he gives you to labour in his service, for the food and clothing which he bestows on you by the hands of your parents, for his many graces which enable you to overcome temptation and keep his commandments. Moreover, you should never forget to thank him for having created you to his image, for having sent his Only Son into the world to die for you, and for having made you by Baptism his children and heirs to his heavenly kingdom. It is our neglect of the duty of thanksgiving which often prevents God from bestowing his blessings upon us; for it is not *just* that those who are ungrateful for past favours should be continually receiving fresh gifts at his hands. Wherefore, when St. Paul exhorts us to have confidence in prayer, he bids us mingle with our petitions acts of thanksgiving for past favours, "With thanksgiving," says he, "let your petitions be made known to God." * For he that is grateful to God for past gifts is sure to obtain from him future blessings.

CURE OF THE TEN LEPERS.

"And as" Jesus "entered into a certain town, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voice, saying, *Jesus, master, have mercy on us.* Whom when he saw he said, *Go show yourselves to the priests.* And it came to pass as they went, they were made clean.

"And one of them when he saw that he was made clean

* Thes. iv. 6.

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went back, with a loud voice glorifying God. And he fell on his knees before his feet giving thanks, and this was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, *Were not ten made clean, and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give thanks to God but this stranger.* And he said to him, *Arise, go thy way, for thy faith hath made thee whole.*"—LUKE xvii. 11—19.

TWENTY-FOURTH INSTRUCTION.

The Christian's Daily Exercise concluded. Conduct to be observed in temptation, after falling into sin, and under any trial. Ejaculatory Prayers. Evening Exercise.

Q. What should you do when you find yourself tempted to sin?

A. I should make the sign of the cross upon my heart, and call upon God as earnestly as I can, saying, "Lord, save me, or I perish."

This last lesson of the Catechism, my dear children, completes the instructions for the guidance of our daily life. And, first, it teaches us what to do when the devil tempts us to sin—*we should make the sign of the cross upon our hearts, and call upon God as earnestly as we can, saying, "Lord save me, or I perish."* The Cross of Jesus Christ, my dear children, is our most powerful weapon against the attacks of satan; for as a beaten child fears the rod, so does the devil tremble and fly before the Cross by which he has been vanquished and his power broken. Hence the Church, when she bids the wicked spirit depart from those who are about to become God's children by Baptism, makes continual use in her exorcisms of the Sign of the Cross. We also do the same when

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we are tempted to sin, signing our hearts with the Holy Cross, to show that we wish them to abide under the protection of our Crucified Lord, and to be wholly devoted to his love. At the same time we *call upon God as earnestly as we can, saying* in the words of St. Peter, *Lord save me, or I perish;* whereby we signify that though we know ourselves to be weak and feeble as a reed, yet that we have a firm confidence in the Divine Power and Goodness, and are fully convinced that all the fury of hell will not be able to overcome us, as long as we have God on our side, combating and fighting with us.

ST. PETER WALKING ON THE WATERS.

It is related in the holy Gospel, that after our Blessed Lord had miraculously fed the multitude in the desert, his disciples at his command embarked upon a boat to return across the sea of Genesareth to the neighbouring city of Capharnaum. Meanwhile Jesus went up into a mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening he was there alone.

"But the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking upon the sea. And they, seeing him walking upon the sea, were troubled saying, *It is an apparition.* And they cried out for fear.

"And immediately Jesus spoke to them saying, *Be of good heart: it is I, fear ye not.* And Peter making answer said, *Lord if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters.* And he said, *Come.* And Peter going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid, and when he began to sink, he cried out saying, *Lord save me.* And immediately Jesus, stretching forth his hand, took hold of him and said to him, *O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?* And when they were come up into the boat, the wind ceased."—*Matt.* xiv. 23—32.

Q. And what if you have fallen into sin?

A. I should cast myself in spirit at the feet of Christ, and humbly beg His pardon, saying, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."

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This answer, my dear children, contains a most precious instruction as to what we should do when we have been so unhappy as to fall into sin. If we follow it faithfully, we shall, through the Mercy of God, be able to draw good out of evil, and the very sin we have committed will be the means of our advancing in humility and Divine love. Remember, then, that when the devil has seduced a soul into sin, his great object is to prevent her from returning to God, since he well knows that the longer she delays, the deeper she will sink in the mire, and the more difficult it will be for her to obtain the Divine pardon. Hence he tries to persuade her that it is of no use asking God's pardon now, for that he is too angry to forgive her, moreover, that she is not sufficiently sorry for her sin to have recourse to God; or again he will tell her that she may as well go on sinning now that she has begun, for that it will be as easy to get pardon for several sins as for one. It is by such lies as these that the devil keeps souls in his power, and leads them on from sin to sin till he has completed their ruin. What then must we do if we have sinned; so as to prevent this wicked spirit from gaining his ends. The Catechism tells us, we must as soon as we have fallen, imitate the prodigal son, and say to ourselves, "I will arise and go home to my father." *We must* come and *cast ourselves in spirit at the feet of Christ,* kneeling as it were before him at the foot of the cross, *and humbly beg his pardon, saying* to him with great fervour, *Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.* Then, having made a sincere act of contrition, and a resolution to be more watchful for the future, and to confess our sin at the first opportunity, we should go on with our duties as if nothing had happened, trying only to perform them with greater fervour and a more pure intention of pleasing God. If thus we act, my dear children, not only

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shall we meet with a merciful and gracious pardon from Almighty God, but our falls will become every day less frequent, and we shall advance rapidly in humility and the love of God.

DELAY NOT TO RETURN TO GOD.

It is related in the life of the holy Abbot St. Paul, surnamed the Simple, that one day when the religious were entering the church, he beheld them all go in with a bright and serene countenance, attended by their Guardian Angels, except one whose countenance was black and gloomy, and who was led by two devils who held him with a bridle, while his good Angel followed at a little distance sad and downcast. The man of God, on seeing this, spent the whole time he was in church in weeping and praying for this soul which he understood to be in a state of sin. At length, the Office being concluded, they left the church, and on looking again at the poor sinner he beheld him quite changed—his countenance now bright aud beautiful, his good Angel rejoicing, and the devils standing at a distance grieving for having lost their prey. Whereupon the Saint, full of joy, earnestly entreated the monk to make known what had happened to him for the edification of the community. Upon this the religious related, that having unhappily fallen into a sin of impurity, he had been much moved during the time of Divine Office by hearing the words of the prophet Isaias: "Cease to do perversely, learn to do well, and then if your sins be as scarlet they shall be made white as snow." * So great was the impression thereby produced upon his soul that he had cast himself in spirit at the feet of our Blessed Lord, sincerely detesting his sin, and imploring his gracious pardon, being fully resolved at the same time to confess his sin as soon as possible and to amend his life. On hearing this recital the good Abbot and the assembled monks returned thanks to God for the fatherly tenderness with which he is always ready to receive the prodigal son when he returns to him by true repentance.—*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

Q. What should you say when God sends you any cross, or suffering, or sickness, or pain?

A. I should say, "Lord, Thy will be done; I take this for my sins."

* Is. i. 16—18.

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The life of man upon earth is beset with many crosses, sufferings and trials. Almighty God has wisely ordained it so, that we may not fix our affections on this earth, but may ever look forward to that true home for which he has created us. Moreover, he has mercifully provided that the sufferings which he sends us here shall be, if we bear them patiently, the means of paying the debt which we owe to him by sin, and purchasing for ourselves eternal joys. "Blessed," says he, "are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." And again, "That which is momentary," says St. Paul, "and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."*

Whenever, therefore, God sends us any cross, suffering, sickness or pain, let us accept it with perfect resignation to his Divine Will, knowing that it comes from the hands of a tender Father, who designs it for our good, and that it will infallibly turn out so, if only we bear it cheerfully for his love, according to those consoling words of St. Paul, "To them that love God, all things work together unto good."† In this spirit we might say in the words of the Catechism, *Lord, thy will be done, I take this for my sins*, or that beautiful petition taught us by our Lord himself, "Thy Will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." Oh, how precious in the sight of God are these little acts of resignation, and that spirit of conformity to the Divine Will in the midst of sufferings and trials. In no way can we advance more rapidly to perfection, in no way can we lay up a greater store of merit for the life to come, than by this perfect union of our will with the Will of God.

* II. Cor. iv. 17. † Rom. viii. 28.

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Q. And what other little prayers should you say to yourself from time to time in the day?

A. O Lord, teach me to do Thy holy will in all things. Lord, keep me from sin. May the name of our Lord be for ever blessed. Come, my dear Jesus, and take full possession of my soul. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

You have already learnt, my dear children, the great value of ejaculatory prayer, by which we converse familiarly with God in the midst of our daily employments. In this answer you are taught some beautiful little aspirations or ejaculations, the knowledge of which will help to make the practice of habitual prayer more easy. Here, for example, is one which you might say when you find it hard to be resigned to the Divine Will, or when you do not know what you ought to do for the best, *O Lord, teach me to do thy holy Will in all things.* The next is a prayer which may be said under temptation, *Lord, keep me from sin.* Then again, supposing that you hear the holy Name of God profaned, what a beautiful practice it is immediately to make him an act of reparation, by blessing or extolling the adorable Name of God, *May the Name of the Lord be for ever blessed!* The next ejaculation is an invitation to our Lord to come and dwell in your hearts, and might be said at any time, but is especially suitable for the day before and the morning of your Communions, *Come, my dear Jesus, take full possession of my soul.* Finally, what could be more beautiful as a prayer of thanksgiving, either on the day of Communion, or after receiving any grace from God, than that prayer of the Church to the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without*

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end.—Amen. So, you see, these little prayers are intended for different occasions, and to provide for different wants of the soul.

Q. What ought you to do before you go to bed?

A. I should kneel down and perform my evening exercise.

As we have begun the day with our morning prayers, so do we finish it with our *evening exercise* or night prayers, which we should say on our knees by our bedside, or before our little oratory. You will find at the end of the Catechism a short and easy form of both morning and night prayers; this you should learn by heart, and recite daily. A most important part of our evening exercise is the daily examination of conscience, in which we pass over in our minds the events of the day, and see whether we have offended God by any thought, word, deed, or by the neglect of any duty. We then make a sincere act of contrition for our sins, along with a firm resolution to avoid them by God's grace for the time to come, as also the company or occasions that have led us into them. This pious practice of carefully examining our conscience each evening, is a most powerful means of correcting our faults and advancing in virtue, and no one who really desires to love God will ever neglect it.

Be faithful, my dear children, to your evening prayers, and however tired or sleepy you may be, never lie down at night without having first knelt down to recite them. Not only should you do this by way of thanksgiving to God for the blessings you have received from him during the day, but also to secure his blessing and protection for the ensuing night. It may be that that very night may be the last of your lives. Should you not, then, tremble to lie down on your beds without having asked pardon

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for your sins and a blessing from God? He who habitually neglects his morning and night prayers is assuredly on the broad road to ruin, for he is wilfully depriving himself of the grace of God, which alone can preserve him from a fall. On the contrary, he who is faithful in reciting them and says them with devotion, is both beloved and protected by God, and has every reason to hope that he will be able to persevere to the end in a good life, and to attain the eternal rewards of heaven.

Q. How should you finish the day?

A. I should observe due modesty in going to bed; occupy myself with the thoughts of death; and endeavour to compose myself to rest at the foot of the cross, and to give my last thoughts to my crucified Saviour.

Having devoutly recited your night prayers, you next proceed to undress yourself, which you do with becoming modesty, occupying yourselves meanwhile with good and holy thoughts, as you did while putting on your clothes in the morning. Thus, for example, you might think of the shortness of life, another day of which has passed by never to return, and of the rapid approach of death, which in the end will come upon us "like a thief in the night," probably when we least expect it. Such thoughts will help us on lying down to turn to Jesus Christ, and compose ourselves to rest at the foot of the cross, giving our last thoughts to that Merciful Saviour who died thereon for the love of us. It is an excellent practice before lying down to sprinkle our beds with holy water, which has great power, through the blessing of the Church, to put to flight the infernal spirits, who often make use of the darkness of the night to suggest to us their most wicked and dangerous temptations. Another useful and pious

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practice is to recite some little prayer the last thing before going to sleep, for example, the following which you can all easily learn :—

"I lay my body down to sleep,
I pray to God my soul to keep,
And if I die before I wake,
I pray to God my soul to take.

"Oh, my good Angel, whom God has appointed to be my Guardian, enlighten and protect me, direct and govern me."

Oh, my dear children, how happy you will be if you follow faithfully throughout life the rule which is taught you in this beautiful chapter of the Catechism! Then, indeed, there will be good reason to hope that when you all meet before the Judgment Seat of God, you may be gathered together in one happy band among the chosen sheep of the Heavenly Shepherd, and that of all of you who now stand around these altar rails listening to my words, there may not be found one missing, not one undeserving of a crown, not one whom the wicked spirits can claim as their lawful prey, and the miserable companion of their torments for all eternity.

THE FORTY MARTYRS OF SEBASTE.

During the persecution waged against the Church by the Emperor Licinius at the beginning of the fourth century, a noble band of soldiers, forty in number, refused to join in the idolatrous sacrifices which were to take place in the camp by the Emperor's orders, and declared not only that they were Christians, but that they were ready to die for their faith. Promises and threats, as well as the most cruel torments having proved of no avail in shaking their resolutions, the judge condemned them to be stripped of their clothes and exposed naked, during a severe frost, upon a frozen pond. As an additional temptation he ordered a fire to be kindled and a warm bath prepared at a little distance, to which they might repair at any time when they were prepared to obey the Emperor's orders.

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On hearing their sentence the martyrs ran joyfully to the place of their punishment, and, having undressed themselves, took their stand at once upon the ice, encouraging one another meanwhile to perseverance, by the reflection that one bad night would secure for them a happy eternity. Then raising their voices to God, they prayed with one accord, "Lord, there are forty of us engaged in this combat, grant that we may be forty crowned, and that not one may be wanting to this sacred number."

As night went on their sufferings became more intense, but they continued to pray fervently, nor did they show any disposition to yield, with the exception of one unhappy man, who leaving the pond, passed to the bath, which he had no sooner entered than he expired. Meanwhile one of the sentinels, who had been stationed before the fire, to observe whether any of the confessors consented to abandon his post, suddenly beheld the pond lit up with a heavenly light, and a band of Angels descending from above, who distributed rich garments and crowns among the generous confessors. He at once understood that the God of the Christians had sent this blessed company to reward the constancy and fidelity of his generous servants. At the same time, he wondered why there were but thirty-nine crowns prepared, whereas the soldiers numbered forty. While thus the sentinel pondered within himself, it was revealed to him that the man who had entered the bath, had forfeited the fortieth crown by his base apostasy, whereupon he was moved by an interior grace, and filled with an ardent desire of gaining it in his stead. He accordingly arose, stripped himself of his garments, and loudly proclaiming himself a Christian, took his place upon the ice amid the band of martyrs. Thus did God hear their prayer, though in a different manner from what they had expected; and when morning came, and the bodies of all alike, both living and dead, were cast upon a burning pile to complete their sacrifice, not one was wanting to complete that glorious company.—*Butler's Saints' Lives.*

My dear children, learn from the history of these forty martyrs to correspond generously with the grace of God, and to pray continually for the gift of final perseverance. The number of God's Saints will in any case be made up, for the grace which one loses is given to another, but unhappy indeed shall *we* be, if by neglecting to live up to our duty as good Chris-

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tians, and by abusing the helps and opportunities which God gives us, we forfeit that glorious crown and are shut out for ever from the Kingdom of Heaven and the blessed company of the Saints and Angels.

LAUS DEO SEMPER; HONOR MARIÆ.

FINIS.

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